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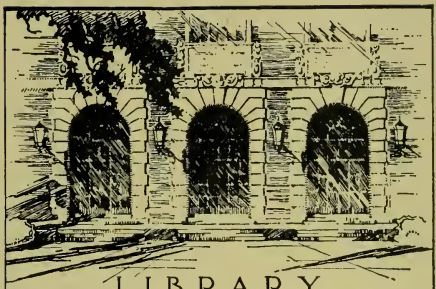

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ANGELO GUICCIARDINI;

OR, THE

Bandit of the Alps.

A ROMANCE.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

By SOPHIA FRANCES,

AUTHOR OF VIVONIO, CONSTANCE DE LINDENSDORF,
AND THE NUN OF MISERICORDIA.

" ——————There is a power
Unseen that rules the illimitable world,
... .
While man, who madly deems himself the lord
Of all, is nought but weakness and dependence."

THOMSON.

" He seemed for dignity composed,
And high exploit: but———"

MILTON.

VOL. II.

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ANGELO GUICCIARDINI.

CHAP. I.

THE agitation of Cecilia, on receiving this summons to attend the marchese, was violent to excess; her emotion almost deprived her of power to direct Lodelli to desire the servant to inform her lord that she would wait upon him in a few minutes.

Pale, trembling, and involuntarily anticipating some disagreeable result to this interview, she at length appeared before the marchese, who, the moment he perceived her, fixed on her countenance an eager and piercing glance, and, in an angry tone, enquired whether the person she had met in the temple on the preceding night was the famous robber Angelo Guicciardini?

Cecilia, shocked and confounded by the abrupt manner in which this question was asked, hesitated ere she faintly articulated an affirmative reply.

The marchese started back; his sallow countenance became darkened with rage and amazement, while in hurried and indignant accents he exclaimed—

"And wherefore didst thou not instantly give information of that circumstance, that that ruffian robber might have been secured?"

If the overwhelming emotions of the hapless Cecilia had already been almost too much for her endurance, how much heightened was her agonizing agitation by this enquiry; an enquiry so reasonable, and yet so difficult to reply to without entering into a full explanation. Silent and abashed, she answered not, 'till the more astonished and enraged Rovenza again demanded her motive for not having had the robber Angelo pursued. Almost unconscious of what she uttered, the timid girl now said—

"I was silent because Angelo Guicciardini threatened the life of my mother in case of my discovering that *he* had been my preserver."

"Threatened the life of your mother!" exclaimed the marchese——"Is the Signora di Berlotti then *really* in *his* power."

"Alas! I know not—but much I fear so, my lord," she replied; then wildly throwing herself at the feet of the marchese, added, in tones of frantic grief, "yet oh! exert your benevolent efforts to restore to me this beloved parent, and my every fu-

ture hour shall be devoted to praying for eternal blessings on your head."

The marchese now gazed on the lovely girl with evident emotion: her imploring tearful eyes, her uplifted hands, raised towards himself in all the animation of earnest supplication, affected him extremely. His colour varied, and gently extending his hand towards her, he faulteringly said:

"Arise, compose yourself, mistaken, but ingenuous Cecilia. Your inclination to present sincerity must atone for the imprudent and extraordinary want of confidence in your best friends. Disclose to me then those circumstances which I suspect you have hitherto concealed from my knowledge, and rest assured of my continued protection and services. Be satisfied that if the recovery of the Signora di Berlotti is not wholly impracticable, she shall be rescued from her foe, or from his most dreadful agents."

The marchese now paused, as if expecting Cecilia to commence the desired communication; and although she was now hardly capable of entering into a long detail of past events, she yet made the attempt, lest he should suppose her inclined to any further reserve.

Faint and agitated as was her manner of relating the former occurrences, the marchese found but trifling difficulty in comprehending her, and made several comments on various parts of her narration,

which proved him to be a most attentive auditor.

When she mentioned Orazio and the pilgrim, he became even minute in his enquiries, especially respecting the latter, and demanded to see the casket of jewels which he had presented her with. Cecilia assured him that they should be given to his inspection, and was then suffered to proceed. The marchese now gave no further interruption to her detail, till she began to speak of her having found the packet of letters on the table in her chamber, in the pallazo at Venice, when he eagerly enquired whether she had those letters still in her possession; and on being answered in the affirmative, he requested to be permitted to peruse them. To this request Cecilia yielded an immediate assent, and presented him with the packet, which she still retained in her own possession.

The marchese retired to a distant window to read the letters. His face, as he examined their contents, was turned from the observation of Cecilia, but the trembling of the papers in his hand evinced the emotion the perusal occasioned him to experience.

He remained for a considerable time thus employed, and read over the letters several times. At length folding them up, and approaching Cecilia, he said, "You are, doubtless, anxious to hear my opinion of these singular epistles, yet the mystery

which envelops the Signora di Berlotti is such as to prevent my forming any decided ideas on the subject. In what light do these letters appear to yourself?"

Cecilia replied, by informing him of her suspicions that the signora had probably been compelled to write an evasive and unsatisfactory account of her situation.

The marchese shook his head, and observed—"The letter appears to me to be a mere forgery, fabricated to throw yourself off your guard, and by teaching you to distrust the good intentions of your friends, render the plans, that are doubtless in agitation to secure your person, the more practicable. Indeed, if the affair is considered in this light, the mysterious appearance of Angelo Guicciardini in the temple last night is perfectly well accounted for; and when you reflect, that you have had reason to believe that you were the principal object of the unknown Count de Weilburgh's malice, you should not be surprised at any artifice practised to ensnare you to ruin."

Cecilia, overwhelmed with fear and anxiety at finding the opinions of the marchese, on this distressing subject, so perfectly coinciding with her own ideas, and now more than ever dismayed at the thoughts of her mother's situation, faintly exclaimed, "Merciful powers! what may be the fate of my dear unfortunate mother!" and sunk almost breathless on the arm of the sofa.

The marchese flew to her assistance, and endeavoured to console her with repeated assurances that he believed the signora to be still living and solemnly vowed to exert himself in her behalf. His words soon imparted a gleam of hope to the dark apprehensions of the afflicted girl, and revived her nearly exhausted spirits. As soon as he imagined her composed enough to be able to reply to his questions, he enquired whether she had replied to the supposed letter of the signora; and she then informed him of her having done so, and the manner of her answer being sent off. When she spoke of the gondolier, to whose care the letter had been entrusted, he looked both surprised and displeased, and said, that he should soon order some investigation of that circumstance amongst his domestics in Venice; and then added, "I imagine it was this pretended gondolier who represented the ghost, which so effectually succeeded in terrifying my stupid majordomo on the night of your receiving the packet."

Cecilia replied that she imagined not, as the description she had received of the figure of the young gondolier by no means corresponded with that of the stranger who had been seen in the vestibule.

"Then it was Angelo Guicciardini himself!" exclaimed Rovenza. "The height, the gigantic form, the mystery, and daring courage, all proclaim it to have been that singular robber. This

circumstance alone is sufficient to prove the intention of carrying you off. But there is another, even more striking, and one that I am amazed has so long escaped your observation. The pretended letter of the signora, your mother, speaks of her being informed that you were under my protection. The evident improbability of her having received any such information, in so short a space of time, was enough, I think, to awaken even the most common mind to a comprehension of the artifice; unless, indeed, you believed that the signora was concealed in Venice; which, I am certain, could not have been the case, as the Sbirri would have discovered her almost immediately. But I am not, on reflection, much astonished at your want of penetration in this dark affair, amiable Cecilia; a young and inexperienced mind could not possibly unravel the links of a chain of deceptive contrivances, which, indeed, it requires an acute judgment to discover. I can only regret that you have so strangely neglected to submit this business to the consideration of those friends who are not more inclined than capable of serving you."

The marchese now requested the conclusion of her communications, begging her at the same time, to be particular in repeating what Angelo Guicciardini had said to her in the temple.

Cecilia endeavoured to be as correct as possible in her reply; and the marchese

again declared his conviction that Angelo did indeed design to carry her off, as another victim to the malice of the Count de Weilburgh; and then thanking her for the effort she had made to give him all the information he desired, he renewed his offers of service ; and after requesting to see the casket of jewels as speedily as convenient to herself, gave her permission to retire to her apartment—a permission of which Cecilia almost immediately availed herself, although the universal tremor of her frame was still such, that she had scarcely strength to proceed to her chamber.

CHAP. II.

On entering her room, she sunk exhausted on the sofa, and yielding to the undefinable feelings of her heart, found relief in a violent flood of tears.

The affectionate concern manifested by her faithful Lodelli was consolatory to her mind, and in a short time she was composed enough to direct the servant to search for the casket, and convey it to the marchese. Away flew Lodelli to execute this commission, but she quickly returned, and, in the greatest consternation, declared that the casket was not to be found in the cabinet in which she had placed it.

This information was equally alarming and distressing to Cecilia. Her own unsuccessful search for it in the earlier part of the morning had given her no uneasiness, as she had imagined that Lodelli might have removed it into another place: but now she was seriously troubled at it being still missing. Trembling with apprehension and concern, she assisted her attendant in another search; but still the casket was not to be found, and at length Lodelli was dispatched to inform the marchese of this disagreeable event.

Lodelli soon returned. Cecilia faintly enquired what the marchese had said.

"Nothing particular, signora," answered Lodelli, "only he asked me several times whether I was quite sure that I had put the casket by safely; and at last he shook his head, and said he supposed some robber had got in, and had stolen it."

This conjecture of the marchese was perfectly reasonable. Cecilia, with a sensation of shuddering horror, mentally acknowledged the probability that the robber Angelo had purloined the casket. She sighed deeply, and Lodelli was too much grieved at seeing her so unhappy and indisposed to dare to trouble her with her own loquacious observations on the loss of the casket; and remembering that her lady had not yet breakfasted, hastened to procure some coffee.

Lodelli had but just returned, when the

Marchesa di Rovenza entered the room. The mournful anxiety depicted in the expressive features of Cecilia appeared to affect her extremely, and tears of sympathising pity trembled in her eyes, as, with almost maternal kindness, she now endeavoured to persuade her young *protegée* to taste the coffee the servant had brought.

Cecilia took the refreshment, but her swelling heart recoiled from it, and she could scarcely swallow a single cupful.

When Lodelli had withdrawn, the marchesa informed Cecilia that she had come to her chamber at the request of the marchese, who had acquainted her with the particulars of the recent interview, and had highly applauded her conduct.

Cecilia then informing the marchesa that it had been her earnest wish to have conversed with her prior to her interview with the marchese, requested permission to consult with her respected protectress on every future occasion.

The amiable marchesa, perceiving in the heavy eyes of Cecilia those indications of approaching indisposition which seriously alarmed her, would not permit the afflicted girl to hold any further conversation, and strenuously recommended to her to attempt to obtain some repose. Repose was, however, as far distant from the couch of Cecilia as it had of late usually been; and she was soon so ill as to require medical advice.

Every attention and assistance that could contribute to her recovery Cecilia now lavishly experienced; yet many days elapsed ere she was again capable of leaving her room. The kindness with which she was treated contributed more to banish her indisposition than all the skill of the physicians; for this tenderness and benevolence, impressed upon her mind the chearing hope that the Marchese and Marchesa di Rovenza were, indeed, most truly interested for her; and therefore she could not doubt that they would exert their utmost power in favour of her mother.

The first information that Cecilia received on her recovery was, that Angelo Guicciardini was supposed to be lurking somewhere in the Venetian territories, and that the doge and senate of Venice had set a price upon his head. This intelligence led her to tremble for the fate of her mother. She dreaded lest Angelo should impute to her representations the rigorous researches which were commenced after him, and that, in consequence of his imbibing such an idea, he would wreak his vengeance on her hapless parent; but on mentioning these apprehensions to the marchese, he assured her that her fears were groundless, as the senate pursued Angelo on a different account. Calmed by these assurances, Cecilia listened with heartfelt gratitude to the detail of some plans which had for their object the discovering of her mother; and although

this innocent girl could not perfectly comprehend the intricacy of these intended plots; yet she heard of them with all the emotions of fear, joy, and expectation, which her truly filial regard and veneration for her parent caused her to feel.

When Cecilia had first rejoined the family parties, she found the Signor Faenza still at the villa, and, to her extreme surprise and satisfaction, the avowed and accepted lover of the Signora Ottavania, and with the express approbation of her parents.

From this moment Cecilia began to think that the signor had, indeed, lured her to the temple, merely with the jesting intention which he had declared had influenced him in the affair. Her own good sense informed her that his having acquainted the marchese, that his opponent on that night was Angelo Guicciardini, was nothing more than any other person would have done in a similar situation; and she now felt grateful for his forbearing to expose that circumstance before the assembled company. As to the opinion that he had formed respecting herself, she could not condemn it; for when she reflected that Faenza was a stranger to her story, she could not but confess that her seeming knowledge of Angelo Guicciardini must have appeared to the signor in a very singular and suspicious light. By such considerations, the artless Cecilia banished from her bosom every transient feeling of resentment, with which the behaviour of

Faenza had inspired her, and as both the Signora Ottavania and himself now treated her with the utmost politeness, she had no farther occasion to feel uneasy in their society; especially as the kindness and attentions which she received from the marchesa, and the Signora della Albina, who still continued at the villa, remained undiminished. But although Cecilia was fully sensible of all the gratitude which the affectionate and consoling friendship of her amiable protectress, and the Signora della Albina, could require, yet she found it impossible to assume even the appearance of tranquillity, while she continued in so much incertitude and alarm respecting her mother.

Day after day passed on in this painful anxiety, and the only relief which Cecilia experienced under her present agonizing state of mind, proceeded from the considerate permission which she had obtained of remaining in her own apartment whenever any particular company visited at the villa. In the quiet and privacy of her room, she could indulge the sorrows of her heart without controul; and if at times the excess of her grief plunged her too far into the gloomy depths of despondency, she found a sure and certain antidote to the poison of despair, in those fervent devotional exercises to which at such moments she always had recourse.

CHAP. III.

While the young and lovely Cecilia di Berlotti, voluntarily secluded from society, and a prey to the most heartfelt distress and painful suspense, awaited with trembling impatience the result of the marchese's efforts for the restoration of her mother, the Marchesa di Rovenza was incessantly importuned by her visitors with so many enquiries respecting the health of her fair *protegée*, and so many singular hints were dropped relative to her uncommonly recluse mode of life, that that amiable lady was at length compelled by her prudent wishes of ending the curiosity that began so generally to prevail in regard to Cecilia, to represent to the latter the necessity of her appearing again in public, as the only means of silencing the impertinent remarks which people were beginning to make.

The sensible and ingenuous mind of Cecilia, conscious of its own integrity, could not comprehend wherefore she should fix the most forcible restraint upon her feelings, and with an almost breaking heart, throw over her countenance the veil of calmness, and mingle with the gay society of those who felt no cares, merely to gratify the curiosity of some, whose opinions, if erroneously formed, she considered as more derogatory to themselves than to her; but

reluctant to pain or offend the marchesa with a refusal, or any observations on the subject, she yielded an assent by informing that lady that she would be guided entirely by her. The marchesa commended her compliance in a manner which proved that her motive for requesting her young *protegée* to do so much violence to her real feelings was no common one, and resulted from the purest wishes of having her appear as amiable and good in the eyes of the world, as she was already in her own. It was now agreed that Cecilia should accompany the marchesa on the following evening to visit a lady, whose villa was situated but a short distance from the Villa di Rovenza; and after this arrangement had taken place, the marchesa reluctantly left her to the melancholy enjoyment of her own sad reflections.

A more than usual depression had this evening stolen over the grief-worn spirits of Cecilia, and the idea of again mixing with the world, rendered the anticipation of the following day most painfully disgusting; but this disagreeable subject was soon superseded by the recollection of those so much more dreadfully important to her.

Seated at the open lattice of her window, and losing in a train of the most gloomy meditations all consciousness of the lapse of time, she perceived not that the increasing darkness of the night would soon make it necessary to retire from her window, till

the sound of voices conversing underneath the balcony roused her from her deep and sorrowful reflections. She started up, and was on the point of retiring, when she plainly distinguised her own name pronounced, and that the speaker was Ottavania di Rovenza. The impulse of the moment inclined her to attend to what was said, and the interest with which the conversation almost instantly inspired her silenced all mental arguments on the impropriety of her situation.

She soon discovered that Ottavania was accompanied by her inseparable attendants, the Bellinzettos, who were speaking to her with a degree of vehemence, such as Cecilia had never supposed they would have presumed to use.—" I hate Faenza.—I *never never* would have consented to be his wife, if I had not feared that that artful witch—that Cecilia di Berlotti might have had him, and I had too much pride and spirit to suffer *that*."

Such were the expressions which first struck the ear of the astonished Cecilia.

" Pshaw, you are deceiving yourself, Signora Ottavania," said Lucilia Bellinzetto—" you were perfectly well pleased with Faenza 'till you met the young *Swiss*, who, with all his bravery and beauty is doubtless as poor as a Franciscan monk."

" Were he the poorest outcast in creation," exclaimed Ottavania, enthusiastically, " he would still be superior to all the Faenzas that ever existed !"

"But he has not once particularly noticed you, signora," observed the elder Bellinzetto, hastily interrupting the Signora di Rovenza, "and probably never may. Nay, I thought he seemed to shun you!"

"Insolent!" muttered Ottavania, "the Signor Locendro appears not to *notice* any woman, and if you fancied that he shunned *me*, it is an evident proof that he beheld me with interest, and not indifference; therefore I have something to hope."

"Hope!" repeated Lucilia Bellinzetto; "and if you have any thing to *hope* from the young Locendro's avoiding you, surely you have infinitely more to *fear* from the rage of the marchese your father, and the Signor Faenza."

"Nonsense! ridiculous!" returned Ottavania—"Do not trouble me with these silly prognostics of evil; but assist me in devising some plan to get rid of Faenza. Suppose we were to make our fine, romantic, weeping heroine, Cecilia, the——"

"Hush! or you are undone;" whisperingly interrupted one of the Signoras Bellinzetto: "our ill luck has brought us under her very window!"

Ottavania now in a low, but spiteful tone, pronounced a malevolent wish on the head of the innocent Cecilia, and the whole party stole so softly away, that the accidental rustling of their garments against the luxuriant branches of the shrubs that

grew beneath the window alone declared their flight.

No language, no description, could justly represent the consternation and surprise which, during this curious conversation, had overwhelmed the mind of Cecilia di Berlotti. For some moments after the despicable group had fled from the spot, she continued in the same attitude of eager attention and recoiling disgust, till the voice of Lodelli, close at her ear, softly whispering, "Are they gone, Signora?" effectually recalled her to recollection. She started, and turning round in the utmost confusion, demanded who Lodelli meant? "The Signora di Rovenza, and her fine companions, signora mio," answered Lodelli. "Did *you* know they were there?" "O yes; signora, I have been standing behind your chair for some time, and I heard every word; and I am as glad as any thing that I did, because now you will believe what I was coming to tell you."

"And what is that?" faintly asked Cecilia, vainly endeavouring to quell her confusion, at having permitted herself to indulge her curiosity at the expence of having committed an error which she blushed to be detected in. Her embarrassment almost prevented her from attending to Lodelli, who informed her that a violent quarrel had already taken place between the Signor Faenza and the Signora Ottavania.

"No one can tell what it is all about, signora," continued Lodelli; "but I'm sure that spiteful Signora di Rovenza means to lay all the blame of it upon you, my dear young lady; and now, how lucky it is that we heard all about this fine young Signor Locendro that she has taken it into her head to fall so deeply in love with."

"You forget that the manner in which this latter circumstance became known to me prevents my availing myself of it, Lodelli," observed Cecilia, while increasing self-reproach caused a deeper blush to suffuse her expressive countenance.

"Why, dear me, my lady, sure *overhearing* any thing is not listening?" cried Lodelli, perfectly comprehending Cecilia's meaning.

"Indeed!" exclaimed the latter, scarcely able to repress a smile.

"No, indeed, signora; to be sure you do know *overhearing* and *listening* are two different things. If you had gone peeping and watching about after them, and stealing to their doors, through curiosity and spite, just to find out what you could for the sake of knowing what did not concern you, and only to make mischief by telling it, that would be listening; but if people will come and talk under your very window, and speak your name so loud that you can't help hearing them, why then there's no harm in it, signora; and you ought to be very glad, at having had an

opportunity of *overhearing* their wicked designs, that you may be upon your guard against them."

This curious definition would at any other time have amused Cecilia, but such whimsical sophistry at the present moment only encreased her seriousness by the conviction that she herself felt but too much inclined to extenuate her own error, by reflections of nearly a similar nature. But notwithstanding this scrupulous delicacy of her feelings on this subject, it was certain that she had not sought an opportunity of attempting to pry into the Signora di Rovenza's secret sentiments and intentions, and therefore could scarcely fail to consider this accidental development of them as most fortunate for herself. This consideration, however, afforded Cecilia but a very insufficient compensation for the pain she experienced from the anticipation of the new evils in which the mean and malicious machinations of Ottavania would probably involve her. Whatever way she directed her thoughts, they encountered only fresh causes for unhappiness: the retrospect of the past was misery, and the future could not be contemplated without the most agonizing apprehensions; for scarcely durst she trust the faint gleam of hope which the probability of the marchese being successful in his endeavours to discover and restore her mother presented to her mind.

The indulgence of all the suggestions of

anxious and supensive solicitude ever heightens affliction. The more Cecilia reflected on her troubles, the more formidable they appeared to be. Her piety, however, prevented her sinking into despair; and dismissing her attendant at an early hour, she repaired to the oratory, and there sought to banish the depressing influence of her griefs and fears by the exercise of fervent devotion.

After an hour passed in prayer, she arose from before the altar considerably composed, but yet she felt no wish to retire to repose. Perceiving some books ranged on a small antique shelf in a recess, near the door, she took down one, and finding it to be an ancient and valuable religious tract, she seated herself near the altar, and began to read. It was a work on the immortality of the soul. The author's style was impressive and animated, but rather fanciful; and as he had thought proper to introduce a long dissertation on the possible appearance of the apparitions of the departed, it is not surprising that Cecilia should feel herself so much interested by the subject as to lose, for a short space, the consciousness of her sorrows. The writer contended for the real existence of spirits, with a warmth equally sincere and energetic. He allowed, indeed, that the influence of an evil conscience, or a wild imagination, might occasionally mislead their possessors with visionary terrors; but this could be no absolute proof against the possibility of

the spirits of the departed returning to earth, and becoming visible to mortal eyes on great and important occasions—such as the development of some flagrant act of injustice or murder.—In such cases, he argued, that apparitions might undoubtedly be permitted to be the agents for the disclosure of foul transactions, which would otherwise be hidden from human eyes: and that such incontestible proofs of this fact had been recorded in all ages, that he imagined that none but those who dreaded an hereafter, and who, to silence their guilty fears, would not admit of the immortality of the soul, could entertain any scepticism on the subject of supernatural agency being sometimes employed on such occasions. After expatiating on this point to a considerable length, many singular and terrific instances, in confirmation of his thesis, were adduced and detailed, some of which were so well related, and bore such a striking air of truth, that Cecilia trembled as she read, and almost feared to raise her eyes from the page of wonder.

Cecilia di Berlotti was not the credulous slave of superstition: neither her education nor her habits had tended to weaken her mind, but she had been wisely taught not arrogantly to insist on the impossibility of any thing, the existence of which she could not positively and decidedly controvert on the most evident proofs. She had sometimes thought that what we term supernatural visitations might at some period

be discovered to be phenomena as fully within our comprehension as many others formerly considered mysteries in the creation were at that moment. But this was an abstract idea which she seldom indulged, and in the present instance her whole mind was so absorbed in the terrifying interest which the work she was reading excited, that she had no powers of reflection at liberty. Every object around her also conspired to enchain her reasoning faculties—the solemn gloom of the oratory, the sound of distant thunder, and the faint flashing of the lightning, transiently gleaming through the painted window, the lateness of the hour, and the death-like stillness which in the pauses of the thunder pervaded the air, all were calculated to impress her imagination with the wild suggestions of superstitious terror; yet still she continued to read, till a vivid flash of lightning suddenly glared through the lofty arched casement, and glancing on the open pages she was reading, dazzled her sight so much, that she let the book fall, and screening her eyes with her hand, heard the loud roar of the thunder sweep along the heavens.

As the heavy peal rolled away, Cecilia fancied she heard a hollow moan mingle with the etherial sounds. It was scarcely audible—it might be the effect of a wakeful fancy, yet the mournful tone shuddered her frame. Aspirating a fervent ejaculation, she fearfully raised her eyes, just as

another flash more brilliant than the last illuminated the oratory, and revealed at the instant to her view a tall and ghastly form, seemingly enshrouded in the long white habiliments of the grave, standing but a short space from the spot where she sat.—No shriek passed the fear-blanched lips of Cecilia. An indescribable awe mingled itself with her terror—her senses did not forsake her, and with steady, but enhorrored gaze, her eyes remained fixed on the appalling vision.—The lamp which burnt on the altar threw but a faint and glimmering light from its almost expiring flame; but even in this deathlike twilight the outline of the dreadful form was still visible.—The figure remained stationary, and the horror-struck sight of Cecilia could faintly distinguish the fixed and dreadful expression of a wan and ghastly countenance, which, partially shaded by the white garment that apparently covered its head, seemed to indicate a tale unutterable and full of woe.

An impulse more than human seemed to impart courage to the heart of Cecilia, as she gazed on the spectral figure before her. Her parched lips unclosed to address the awful form—already her chilled hand had imprinted the symbol of her religion on her bosom, and the first faint accent trembled on her tongue, when a third tremendous flash, red, angry, and prolonged, displayed more fully than before the object of her terror. With one rapid, gliding step, it

instantaneously approached the altar.—One pallied hand pointed to the scull and cross bones, the other raised a dagger, and from its scarcely moving lips, a shrill and piteous voice issued, exclaiming, "It was a murder!—a cruel, damning murder!" and, with another deep and hollow sigh, vanished from the wild and frenzied gaze of Cecilia, who now sunk lifeless at the foot of the altar.

CHAP. IV.

When Cecilia awoke from her death-like swoon, she found herself in total darkness. As returning reason animated her frame, the recollection of the recent horrible scene she had beheld recurred. Even more terrified by the remembrance than she had been by the dreadful reality, she involuntarily closed her eyes, and for some moments had neither courage nor power to move from the spot. The lightning still streamed through the air at intervals, but the thunder was faint—the bright flashes penetrated the closed eye-lids of Cecilia with a faint gleam of light. Once more she ventured to open her eyes, but she looked not around, and, directed by the lightning, she tremblingly reached the door leading into her dressing room, and hurried from thence into her chamber; and after fastening the door, as in the hurry

of her alarm she imagined her so doing would afford her security from the dreadful supernatural being she had beheld, she threw herself on her bed, and with anxious fearfulness listened to the thunder, and wished for the morning. In this state Cecilia did not remain above an hour before the tempest died away, and the clear dawn of light began to overspread the heavens; and soon the warm and enlivening rays of the sun cheared and animated the face of nature. But Cecilia arose not to welcome nor to contemplate the beautiful scene. Her exhausted spirits, freed from the influence of fear, sunk almost into stupifaction, and heavy slumbers succeeded to the late overstrained violence of her feelings.

When she again awoke, she perceived Lodelli sitting watching beside the bed, and now learnt that the morning was far advanced.

Demanding whether the marchesa had enquired for her, she essayed to arise; but Lodelli's astonishment on perceiving that her lady was still dressed as she had left her on the preceding night prevented her replying to the question.

"Oh, dear signora!" exclaimed the latter, "what has made you keep on your clothes all night? Oh, holy saints, how deadly pale you are — you look as if you were dead—Have *you* heard the noises, signora?"

"Noises! what noises, Lodelli?" faintly

asked Cecilia, while a shuddering chill pervaded her frame, as the vision of the night revived in all its horrors to her mind.

"O, such noises, signora—they were so terrible that the Signora Ottavania rang up all her women, and made them sit up with her till the morning. But—"

"There was a dreadful tempest last night," observed Cecilia, faulteringly.

"O, yes, signora," replied Lodelli, "I know that. The thunder roared so loudly, and the lightning flew about in such a manner, that I was quite frightened;—but there were such sad cries too—so dismal and heart-breaking, sounding so mournful in the air.—Every body in the villa heard them except the marchese and marchesa; and do you know, signora, that the servants say they are sure that some of the family are going to die; for such screams are sometimes heard going round and about the house just before death.—Did you hear them, signora?"

Cecilia, perfectly aware that she must not awaken the fears of Lodelli, by informing her of the dreadful and supernatural event which had occurred to herself during the night, immediately availed herself of the present opportunity of accounting for her pallid looks, and her not having undressed, merely by saying she had been alarmed by hearing some hollow groans in the night, and by this partial truth evaded relating the whole.

The good-natured Lodelli, audibly be-

wailing the altered looks of her young lady, insisted on being permitted to pass the nights henceforth in her apartment; a permission readily granted by Cecilia, who had not at present courage to refuse the request.

While she was dressing she endeavoured to reflect on the propriety of informing the Marchesa di Rovenza ofwhat she had beheld in the oratory, but the recollection of the Signora della Albina's serious caution to her to avoid the mention of any mysteries which might occur in the family of Rovenza, checked her inclination to acquaint the marchese or marchesa with the affair. After some consideration, Cecilia resolved to confide the awful secret to the Signora della Albina, and to be guided by that lady as to her future conduct respecting it.

This determination was scarcely formed in the mind of Cecilia, when she received a message from the marchesa requesting her presence to breakfast. When she descended, she found the whole family and the usual guests, except Faenza, assembled in the breakfast saloon. They were all conversing on the subject of the violence of the tempest, which had kept them awake during the night; but not the slightest mention was made of the noises spoken of by Lodelli. The Marchese di Rovenza declared that he had seldom rested more undisturbed than he had done that night. The marchesa appeared pale

and indisposed, and remained silent. Cecilia's looks so truly evinced that she had past an unquiet night that none of the company were surprised when she confessed she had been considerably alarmed.

Soon after breakfast she privately requested an interview with the Signora della Albina, who now accompanied her to her apartment.

With excessive agitation, Cecilia detailed to this lady the extraordinary and horrible circumstance she had witnessed in the oratory. The signora listened to the relation with visible marks of awe and astonishment; for Cecilia's account of the supernatural visitant was so strikingly impressive and apparently correct, that the former could not suppose her young friend to have been imposed on by the effect of imagination.

When Cecilia ceased speaking, the Signora della Albina did not immediately reply. She appeared to reflect intently for some moments on the subject. At length she said, "you have done perfectly right in deciding not to inform either the Marchese or Marchesa di Rovenza of this strange affair; the former might probably feel himself offended by what he would term your fantastic dreams, and I am convinced that a knowledge of the circumstance would plunge the marchesa into the utmost horror and distress. But although I recommend to my dear young friend to persevere, if possible, in a prudent silence

on the subject, I certainly would not advise you to expose yourself to the hazard of encountering a repetition of such awful and terrific scenes, and therefore I think you should immediately devise some plausible pretext for objecting to your present apartment, and exchange it for another."

"But wherefore should I remove into another apartment, to avoid a shade, which, if deputed to reveal aught to me, may follow me into the deepest recesses of the earth?" said Cecilia; and then, after a short pause, added, "but you certainly do not doubt the appearance being supernatural, signora."

"It is impossible for me to decide with certainty on such a point," replied the Signora della Albina. "The singular work you were reading—the lone dreariness of the time of night—the place you had chosen to sit in—the tempest, and the state of your mind, might have contributed to impress your imagination with very terrific images.—But in contradiction to all this, the accuracy with which you related the event, and my own conviction that you do not possess a weak and common mind, inclines me to believe that your senses have not been deceived by any illusion of fancy.—But this is a subject on which I am not competent to speak. The arguments for and against the possible existence of supernatural agency are so various and contradictory, that we know not which to give implicit credence to; yet allowing that

what you have seen was merely the effect of imagination, you undoubtedly ought not to remain any longer in this apartment, where it is impossible but that the recollection of last night must continually recur to your memory, and distress you with a thousand terrifying apprehensions."

"But what objection can I possibly urge against an apartment so perfectly convenient and elegant, without incurring, if not singular suspicions, at least the imputation of intolerable caprice, signora?" observed Cecilia.

The signora looked wistfully around the room, as if she hoped to discover some defect which would authorise Cecilia to request a change; but she soon looked as perplexed as the former. At length the Signora della Albina said, "I must confess that I cannot at present assist you out of this dilemma, my dear Cecilia; but as I understand you are to accompany us this night to the Villa di Luzzana, and as I am certain that we shall not return here till the following morning, we must take a little time to consider what excuse can be formed for your requesting another apartment. In the mean while we will visit the scene of your terrors, if you have courage to accompany me thither."

Cecilia declared herself perfectly acquiescent, and they immediately proceeded into the oratory. Here they found every thing as usual, except that the lamp, which Cecilia had brought with her on the pre-

ceding night, now lay overset on the altar, a trivial circumstance which she justly attributed to her possibly having touched it by accident as she fell.

While they remained here for a few moments, the looks of the Signora della Albina became more pallid and grave than they had appeared even when Cecilia was relating to her the alarming occurrence which was the occasion of their present visit to the oratory. She sighed deeply, and spoke not once 'till they returned to the dressing room, and then making a vain attempt to assume some appearance of composure, she said, in a voice faultering, and hardly audible from internal emotion, "You are doubtless surprised, my dear young friend, at the excessive agitation which you perceive I can neither suppress nor disguise; but you will cease to be so when I inform you that these apartments were once occupied by one who was, while on earth, one of the dearest friends of my heart.—It is the remembrance of that loved friend, whose sudden and mysterious death has never yet been clearly accounted for, that now fills my bosom with so much inquietude and grief."

"Sudden and mysterious death!" faintly articulated Cecilia; "and did this valued friend expire *here*, signora?"

The signora was prevented from replying by Lodelli's entering the room. The latter, however, instantly perceiving who was with her lady, was hastily withdrawing,

when the Signora della Albina eagerly requested Cecilia to recal her servant, adding, "At some other time I will explain all you wish to know; at present I am incapable of the effort." The signora then convulsively pressed the hand of Cecilia, and precipitately hurried from the apartment, leaving the latter equally astonished and alarmed at a conduct so singular and distressing. That the signora had hastened away to avoid all explanation of her recent terrifying hints was evident. It appeared equally certain that she was acquainted with some strange and mysterious circumtances connected with the apartments. A horrible suspicion now darted into the mind of Cecilia, and whispered to her affrighted imagination the probability that those circumstances, and the dreadful vision of the last night, had some relation to each other. A train of the most torturing doubts, fears, and surmises, succeeded this harassing idea, and again she became involved in all the perplexity and incertitude which had latterly attended her endeavours to develope any of the mysteries with which she was surrounded. Had the Signora della Albina replied in the affirmative to her enquiry, whether the friend she lamented had died in those apartments, Cecilia would certainly have considered herself as fully justified in the conjecture that the supernatural being she had beheld in the oratory might really be the restless shade of that person, whose death, it appeared from the hints of the Signora

della Albina, had been attended with some strange and singular circumstances. But were this the case or not, Cecilia had no present means to decide. She felt that every passing moment increased her reluctance to pass another night in the apartments, yet knew not how to object to so doing, unless she were to reveal her real motives: an alternative which the impressive cautions given her by the Signora della Albina not to mention the affair to the marchese or marchesa rendered her extremely averse to adopt.

Thus every day, every hour, apparently overwhelmed her with new causes for distress and alarm, and in her present mournfully perturbed state of mind she recoiled with disgust and uneasiness from the idea of going into company, and yet trembled at the prospect of remaining in her apartment. With a heavy and dejected heart, she at length prepared to accompany the marchesa to the villa of her friend, and at the appointed hour entered the splendid equipage of her protectress, with sighs which breathed an unfeigned wish that she was for ever departing from the Villa di Rovenza.

CHAP. V.

The Contessa Julia Luzzana, the friend to whose villa the Marchesa di Rovenza and her guests were now proceeding, was a woman whose rank was not more exalted

than her virtues. She possessed but a small portion of that pride of birth and illustrious situation that deprives so many persons in her sphere of all claims to love and admiration; but though gentle and condescending in her manners, she still retained a sufficient consciousness of her own dignity, and while she was indolized by the indigent and unfortunate for her charity and urbanity, she was respected and revered as an example of every estimable quality by all who knew her.

Cecilia had never seen this lady, but she was prepared by the eulogiums of the Marchesa di Rovenza to behold her with the most favourable sentiments; and found all her pleasing expectations realized in her reception at the Villa di Luzzana. The amiable contessa was, indeed, all she had been represented to be, and her residence seemed the chosen abode of taste, elegant simplicity, and refined society.

The marchesa and her friends found a large party already assembled when they arrived, and every moment added to the number. The light and cool halls and gardens were brilliantly illuminated, yet there was nothing in the scene similar to the luxurious magnificence of the Villa di Rovenza; there all was glittering splendour and superb display, here graceful simplicity was united with unostentatious elegance. Music and conversation were the chief amusements of the select society that frequented the Villa di Luzzana, and

on this night harmony and wit combined with more than usual excellence to render the party delightful. This pleasing and novel change of scene produced a very efficacious effect on the depressed spirits of poor Cecilia. Except the Marchesa di Rovenza, and the Signora della Albina, she had not, as yet, met with any person who so much interested her as the Contessa di Luzzana, whose youth and chastened liveliness of manner would certainly have formed her a much more suitable friend for the young Cecilia, than either the Marchesa or the Signora della Albina, had not the mind of Cecilia been so saddened and afflicted by her own peculiar circumstances. The contessa, however, paid the lovely girl so many polite attentions, and so often regarded her with looks that seemed to indicate that she felt for her the most friendly interest, that Cecilia could not avoid being gratified by the distinguishing notice of a lady so amiable.

The illustrious guests of the contessa, following the example of their charming hostess, where assiduously attentive to the young stranger, who was soon engaged in conversation with a group of the company, and heedless of all around, till some person near her pronouncing the name of Signor Locendro caused her hastily to look round to behold this young stranger, who she knew had made so lively an impression on the senses of Ottavania di Rovenza.

For some moments the eyes of Cecilia were vainly directed in search of this highly praised Signor Locendro. The hall, which was entirely open on two sides, and adorned with light and spacious porticoes, was so filled with the company that she could not distinguish whether any new visitor had entered, and now relinquished her efforts to discover him amid the crowd. But feeling still some interest respecting the Signor Locendro, as one devoted to endure the disgusting advances of the Signora di Rovenza, she turned to a lady who sat next her, and timidly enquired which was the Signor Locendro, and who he was. "He is a young Swiss officer in the Venetian army," replied the lady, "and beginning to be the very idol of the ladies for his beauty and his *coldness*, I believe.—But if you wish to see him, have the goodness to turn your eyes towards the pillars that support the dome of the hall. He is now standing close to one of them, and the light of the lamps on the pillar nearest him shines so full on his face, that you may now have a perfect view of his fine features.—That is him with the——"

The lady was suddenly interrupted by Cecilia's falling fainting from her seat. She had eagerly turned to behold the Signor Locendro, and in him had discovered Orazio Angelo.

In a moment she was surrounded by a group whom her fainting and the cries of

the lady into whose arms she had sunk had gathered around her.

On re-opening her eyes, the first object they encountered was Orazio, who, pale, agitated, and with distracted demeanour, was wildly gazing on her, and watching her recovery with looks which spoke excess of tenderness, surprise, and eager anxiety. Cecilia, again overpowered by the conflicting emotions which racked her heart, once more sunk into a state of insensibility, and was soon removed from the hall to a private apartment, where for some time every endeavour to restore her to animation proved unsuccessful. When at length she was with much difficulty recovered, she was so faint and languid, that she had not power to articulate a single word, but gazed around with a half vacant, half enquiring look, which was succeeded by a burst of tears. The Contessa di Luzzana, the Marchesa di Rovenza, and the Signora della Albina, with some female attendants, were the only persons present. As soon as the ladies perceived that the interesting object of their anxious cares was sufficiently recovered, they dismissed the servants, and the contessa, with a considerate politeness, which proved her superior to the wish of prying into the occasion of Cecilia's fainting, withdrew, leaving her alone with the marchesa and the signora her friend. The marchesa now gently enquired what had affected her

young *protegée* in so singularly violent a manner? "Speak to me without reserve, my dear child," said this amiable woman, her looks evincing how deeply she was interested and affected. "The Signora della Albina is already entrusted with your story, and you may one day learn that her friendship is deserving your gratitude."

Cecilia timidly raised her eyes to the countenances of her friends. Gratitude beamed from her expressive glance, as she met their looks fixed on her with so much affection and concern, and she faintly pronounced, "I have been overwhelmed with amazement at finding in the Signor Locendro, the supposed Swiss officer, *Orazio Angelo*."

The surprise of the Marchesa di Rovenza, and the Signora della Albina, was not so great as Cecilia had expected. The marchesa appeared particularly confused, and she hastily said, "You have been deceived, my Cecilia, by an accidental resemblance; and I would earnestly advise you not to assert for truth a probable mistake, lest you should injure the character and fortunes of a young man so truly amiable as is the Signor Locendro.—It is impossible that they can be the same."

Cecilia's astonishment was now unbounded. She almost believed that her senses were deranged, and she forbore to contradict the marchesa more from the want of power to do so, than from any conviction that she was right herself, or from respect

to that lady, much as she loved and revered her.

Her silence very much affected the marchesa, who soon, in a kind but agitated tone, proposed returning with her to the Villa di Rovenza.

"Oh! do not go there, I entreat, madam!" exclaimed Cecilia, with wild eagerness. "Indeed I cannot support the horrible recollection of what occurred last night in those terrible apartments." "Merciful providence!" ejaculated the marchesa, "her senses are certainly disordered."

"Ah, no!" sighed Cecilia, "my senses are but too perfect."

"What does she mean?" said the marchesa, turning towards the Signora della Albina, who, in extreme agitation, replied, "I grieve at the necessity I am under of informing you, that your *protegée* was last night most seriously alarmed by fancying she beheld some supernatural appearance in the oratory belonging to her apartments; and I now perceive the impression of terror is so fixed on her mind, that she is unable to conceal this event from your knowledge." "And wherefore should she conceal it?" uttered the marchesa, in tones scarcely audible. "Fancied;—Oh! Cecilia, describe to me what you witnessed."

"Forbear, my friend," said the signora, evidently extremely alarmed: "why should you seek to torture yourself by— Signora di Berlotti, suffer me to represent to you, that regard for the marchesa's and your

own health should forbid your dwelling on this subject."

Cecilia, recalled by the impressive manner in which the signora spoke to a just sense of her incautious and involuntary allusion to the mysterious event of the last night, lost, in her awakened anxiety for the ease of her protectress, almost all consciousness of her own situation, and, in tremulous accents, essayed to retract the meaning of the words she had uttered respecting her apartment. But the marchesa was not to be thus deceived, and she so peremptorily insisted on knowing what had really alarmed Cecilia, that the latter was at length compelled by her entreaties to promise to relate the whole affair at a more favourable opportunity. The marchesa now declared that she would not return home that night, and then fixing on her young *protegée* a look earnest, penetrative, and full of indefinable feelings, she added, "And you, Cecilia, you may do well to observe that I recommend most seriously to you, not to suffer your mistake respecting the Signor Locendro to become public.—I repeat to you, that it is impossible that you can have beheld in him the young man called Orazio Angelo; and were your assertions to attach any suspicion or disgrace to the name of Locendro, the consequences might prove a source of the deepest affliction and regret to yourself."

The amazed Cecilia listened with the utmost anxiety to the singular cautions

of the marchesa; but she ventured to say, "Although I cannot conceal my surprise at my revered protectress's to me extraordinary intimations, yet I most unreluctantly promise not to mention the subject on which you thus enjoin me to silence to any person but the Marchese di Rovenza, who, I presume to suppose, is not included in this prohibition.—To conceal from him what I imagine I have discovered might be most dangerous to the safety of my mo——"

The marchesa looked impatient and distressed, and now, interrupting Cecilia, said —"There is no occasion for *you*, my dear child, to acquaint the marchesa with this affair.—*I* will mention to him your mistake and alarm, and the communication will be better received from me than from yourself. —I must therefore again desire that you will be silent on this point."

Cecilia, thus commanded to silence, forbore to make any reply; and could only consider the conduct of the marchesa with increased surprise, while she trembled to obey her injunctions. That she had indeed seen Orazio she felt most certain, nor could she imagine what motive had influenced the marchesa to insist that she was mistaken. The present, however, was not a moment for reflection. She was now sufficiently recovered to be capable of returning to the company, and urged by an impulse of intense anxiety to see Orazio once more, in the hope of obtaining from him some information relative to the letters she had re-

ceived at Venice as from her mother, she arose, and proposed to the marchesa their returning to the hall.

The expressive countenance of Cecilia betrayed so much that she had some design in view, that the marchesa, regarding her with a very penetrating glance, said as they were leaving the room—

"Recollect, Cecilia, that I have most earnestly warned you to be careful of the fame of the Signor Locendro."

"I shall attend to your injunctions, certainly, madam," replied Cecilia; "yet surely the Signor Locendro, were I mistaken in believing him to be that Orazio Angelo who I have so much reason to apprehend was one of the agents of my mother's inveterate foe, could easily justify himself from any odium which my suspicions could cast upon his honour, by the word of those friends to whom he is known."

They had now reached the folding doors of the hall, and she had only time to add, "But I will be silent madam."

The marchesa pressed her hand in token of approbation, and then entered the hall.

Cecilia was immediately surrounded by ladies and noblemen, all eagerly solicitous to present their complimentary gratulations on her recovery and re-appearance. Animated by internal emotion, she replied with seeming calmness, but her wandering glance sought in vain for Orazio. He was no where to be seen among the gay throng, nor did he again appear during the remain-

der of the evening. This circumstance almost convinced Cecilia that she had not been deceived, as the Marchesa di Rovenza would have induced her to suppose herself to have been; and her perturbation increased to such an excess, that she hardly knew how to conceal the violent emotions she suffered from the observations of the company present. Fear for her mother urged her to instantly reveal to the marchesa her having seen Orazio. Was he not the companion of Angelo Guicciardini, and therefore his assistant in the vile plan which had for its object the carrying off her mother and herself. How then should she suffer him to escape with impunity, perhaps to add new torments to those which that beloved mother too certainly endured; and yet the marchesa's earnest warnings, the fear of acting wrong, the bare possibility that she might, indeed, have been deceived by an extraordinary resemblance, and the dread of probably injuring the innocent, held her silent: but she suffered during that night such an agony of contending feelings as nearly deprived her of her reason.

CHAP. VI.

From her sleepless couch she arose, pale, languid and exhausted: a sickly fear pervaded her heart, and even the light of

the sun was unwelcome to her soul; the restless anguish of her mind rendered her almost incapable of performing her morning devotions, and she felt not the usual calm resulting from prayer, because her unsettled feelings prevented her experiencing the fervour of religious hope and confidence in Heaven.

In this dismal and afflicting state of mind she awaited the hour of breakfast. At length she received a message from the Contessa di Luzzana, requesting to see her alone. In considerable agitation, Cecilia followed the attendant to an elegant apartment, where to her utter amazement she found Locendro—or rather Orazio himself. She had not been mistaken. He was standing at a remote window of the apartment when she entered; but the moment he beheld her, he advanced towards her, and in time only to prevent her falling; for her weakened and agitated spirits were unequal to the unexpected circumstance of finding him in the room. Happily his approach, by recalling her to a proper sense of her situation, inspired her with strength to resist the faintness then fast stealing on her frame. For one moment only she suffered the supporting assistance of Orazio, whose emotion seemed to deprive him of the power of articulating a word, and who, when she mildly and with silent dignity repelled his support, gazed on her with a look which expressed the utmost grief and despondence, while, pale, trem-

bling, and overwhelmed with the most conflicting sensations, she sunk on a sofa near her.

For several moments both were silent.—Orazio was the first who interrupted this agitative pause: in low and tremulous accents he said—"If I have not been so unfortunate as to have offended the Signora Cecilia di Berlotti, may I flatter myself with the hope that she will permit me to explain why I was compelled to leave, with so much precipitation, that sweet and tranquil cottage, where the friendship and compassion of the signora, her mother, so lately granted me an asylum."

"Inform me first, Signor, where my beloved, unhappy parent may be found," said Cecilia.

"Signora!" exclaimed Orazio, starting, "what am I to understand?—Is not the Signora di Berlotti at her cottage in the Milanese!"

The surprise and enquiring anxiety depicted on the expressive features of Orazio struck Cecilia with the utmost amazement.—She knew not what to suppose, nor how to reply, till suddenly conjecturing that his manner might be affected, merely to conceal his knowledge of a transaction which he might now intend to deny, she said, "Can you, who rescued the signora, my mother, from the hands of those ruffians employed by her cruel enemy to drag her from the peaceful habitation of our hap-

piest years, assume an ignorance of a fact so well known to you, Signor?"

"Good Heaven!" cried Orazio, "how much you afflict me, Signora.—For your own sake, suffer me to beseech you to believe that I really am ignorant of the strange affair to which your words allude.—'Till this moment I knew not that any such misfortune as your expressions imply had occurred to the Signora di Berlotti; and I am equally confounded and amazed by your incomprehensible accusation of myself. But, I entreat,—I implore you, Signora, to acquaint me with the particulars of this strange circumstance, that I may be allowed the power of detecting the artifices which, I fear, have been practised on your innocent and ingenuous nature.—Believe me, amiable Cecilia, believe me, when I solemnly assure you that I have neither seen nor heard aught of the Signora di Berlotti from that day when I last beheld her in the cottage on the banks of the Lago Maggiore; and that I experience the most intense anxiety and impatience to develope the mystery by which you have been led to suppose me to have been so actively concerned in the business to which your words refer."

Cecilia, more and more perplexed and agitated, knew not how to reply: the apparent sincerity and earnest solicitude of Orazio's looks and manner almost induced her to believe that he was indeed unaccessary to the plan so successfully executed

against her mother.—A few moments silent reflection, however, revived all her prejudices in his disfavour, and afraid of yielding a credulous attention to his asseverations respecting his innocence and ignorance of the whole affair, she half determined to retire from the apartment, and to inform the Marchese di Rovenza of his being in the villa; whom she doubted not would compel this mysterious young man to a full confession of the truth. This latter idea, however, was almost instantaneously rejected. A timid tenderness, almost unconscious to herself, pleaded for Orazio in her bosom, and she resolved to inform him of those disagreeable circumstances which had taken place from the time of her last beholding him in the cottage, till the present moment. In so doing, she felt that she should run no hazard of incurring any danger; for if Orazio had been concerned in the transaction, she could acquaint him with nothing but what was already well known to him; and if he was innocent, it would but be an act of justice to give him an opportunity of vindicating himself. Thus argued the artless Cecilia, and while yielding to the impulse of a pure and just mind, she remembered not that cunning villainy can assume the mask of honourable integrity in the support of deep-laid interested schemes.—She now related to Orazio every occurrence which had followed his departure from the cottage. The varying emotions with

which he listened to her detail, seemed to carry conviction of his innocence. At the mention of Cecilia's meeting Angelo Guicciardini in the caverns, his looks expressed the utmost anxiety and earnest attention, and she almost fancied that he felt disappointed and uneasy, as she related how she had escaped from the robber. When she spoke of the letters she had received, and, with all the facility of a deeply impressed memory, repeated the contents of the billet signed Angelo Guicciardini, Orazio started, and, as if impelled by a quick, involuntary impulse, exclaimed—"It was Angelo himself—Oh, yes; it could be *he* only that released the signora from the hands of her enemy—yes, assuredly, that brave unfortunate was himself the preserver of that lady; and to me has he feignedly attributed an action I so deeply regret the not having had an opportunity to have performed."

"You are mistaken, signor: I had some reason for supposing that it was my mother who declared that you were her deliverer," returned Cecilia, while her astonishment at the exclamations of Orazio was beyond all description great.

"The Signora di Berlotti make such a declaration!" cried Orazio, "this is indeed amazing. May I request a perusal of the letter which you imagine to have been written by the signora?"

"Alas, I have cause to apprehend that letter to be but a forgery, and have consigned both the epistles to the care of the

Marchese di Rovenza, who generously interests himself in the behalf of my dear parent, and who will soon compel that dreadful man, whom you now term a brave unfortunate, to release my mother from that captivity, in which, I fear, I too justly believe he holds her."

While Cecilia spoke, an anxious and penetrating expression marked the features of Orazio, and when she paused, in low and hollow accents, he articulated—

"Am I to suppose from the language of the Signora Cecilia, that to her entreaties are owing the steps which I hear are just commenced to ensure the apprehension of Angelo Guicciardini, who, if I am rightly informed, is still believed to be in the Venetian territories?"

There was such an increasing singularity of expression in the countenance of Orazio, as he made this enquiry, that Cecilia shrunk back, alarmed and amazed from the piercing glances of his dark eyes, and felt herself wholly incapable of replying to his question. In the short pause which succeeded, he continued to gaze on her with a look of the most scrutinizing anxiety, and at length in a tone scarcely audible, repeated his enquiry. An involuntary and irresistible emotion of terror held her silent; her embarrassment and taciturnity seemed to give him the information he had required, for after a momentary pause, he said—

"It is even so then. Lovely, unfortu-

nate Cecilia! and yet wherefore should I have imagined, even for a moment, that thy delicate and ingenuous mind could admit a confidence in the promise of a *robber*; but hadst thou dared to confide in the promise of *that* man, no danger could have assailed you; for the word of Angelo Guicciardini is inviolable. Your fatal doubts have too probably plunged *him* into ruin who would have saved *you*. This is not a moment for ceremony; I fly to endeavour to remedy some of the evils which thine inexperience and artlessness may have already occasioned. Yet, oh forgive me, Cecilia, fogive the wild and harsh impetuosity which my frenzied feelings have impelled me to display. On my return I will explain—Ah, that I could obtain your confidence; that I could prevail with your gentle nature to confide in me as in a brother. But no; I dare not hope this. Yet suffer me, ere I depart, to implore, even for your own sake, that you will forbear to mention, for the space of *six days*, that you know me, otherwise than as the Signor Locendro. If at the expiration of that period you do not again behold me, conclude that I am no more in existence on earth. Yet, ah remember, that in branding the name of Orazio Angelo with the odium which may be attached to it by the recital of those mysterious and unexplained circumstances which appear to unite me in bonds of friendship with Angelo Guicciardini, you add a

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deeper wound to the fame of a noble and unfortunate family, at whose fate you may one day weep with tears of agonizing sympathy: adieu, amiable, admirable Cecilia; in six days we meet again, or now part for ever." He then fled with precipitation from the apartment, leaving Cecilia so wholly overcome by the violence of those contending emotions which his addresses had occasioned her to feel, that she had not power to recal him.

CHAP. VII.

Before she recovered from the consternation that had seized her, the Contessa di Luzzana entered the room.

Cecilia fixed on her a wild and anxious look, and impatiently demanded whether Orazio had yet quitted the villa?

The contessa, regarding her with a glance of mingled surprise and enquiry, exclaimed, "What has thus disconcerted you, signora? and for whom do you enquire?" Cecilia, now tremblingly recollecing that she had asked for Orazio by the name of Angelo, sought to repair her error, by pleading that her indisposition made her almost unconscious of what she said. She then, in faultering accents, requested to know if the Signor Locendro had as yet left the villa.

The contessa in reply informed her, that

he had just bade her adieu, as he was obliged to hurry his departure in consequence of having received some important intelligence which compelled him to take his leave so suddenly.

Cecilia became paler and more agitated, and the amiable Contessa, extremely alarmed, would have flown for some assistance for her young guest. Her anxious and gentle attentions, however, had already restored the fainting girl, who now entreating the contessa's forgiveness for the surprise and trouble she had occasioned her, timidly ventured to enquire whether she had been long acquainted with the Signor Locendro, and to what family he belonged. "The Contessa di Luzzana," added the diffident Cecilia, "will do me the justice to believe that no light or imprudent reasons urge me to this earnest enquiry, and to implore some account of this young Signor?" The contessa looked rather embarrassed, and after a short hesitation, said:

"My knowledge of the Signor Locendro's family and circumstances is so very limited, that I fear I cannot afford you the information you desire, amiable Cecilia. The few circumstances I have been made acquainted with relative to this young man have been entrusted to my keeping under the most serious injunctions to secrecy; but, I believe, I may venture to inform you thus far:—The Signor Locendro has been most particularly recom-

mended to my notice by my uncle, the Bishop of Verona; who wishes me to give some consequence to this young signor, by admitting him to my parties: he is, I believe, of illustrious birth, but, from some strange and peculiar circumstances, compelled to remain, for a while, unknown for what he really is. I will confess, however, that there is a degree of singularity about this young man which is calculated to excite extraordinary surmises: but you have seen him before your meeting here, I believe."

Cecilia, deeply blushing, acknowledged that she had.

"And in what light did he then appear to you, Signora Cecilia? Certainly it must have been equivocal when you are thus distressed."

Cecilia did not reply: the contessa looked perplexed, surprised and uneasy. "My uncle may have been imposed upon," she said, and then added: "This Signor Locendro this morning requested to see you, and in a manner which implied that he was not unacquainted with you: I took the liberty of requesting your presence, in order to introduce him anew to you, but having been hastily summoned from the apartment to a courier just arrived with dispatches from my husband, who is now abroad, in a diplomatic capacity, I was prevented from being present at the commencement of your interview; which I now sincerely regret having been so im-

prudent as to permit taking place before I had an opportunity of learning how far it would have been agreeable to you. Be assured, that could I have foreseen how much this circumstance would have affected you, not on any account would I have hazarded such an unpleasant result; I can only entreat your pardon, and repeat my regrets for my inconsiderate conduct in the affair."

Cecilia scarcely heard the apologies of the contessa; her every mental faculty seemed engrossed by the most agitating reflections, and instead of replying, she involuntarily exclaimed: "Merciful Providence! how shall I decide: what course can I now pursue: by what means can I develope the dreadful mysteries in which my fate appears to be involved!" Then suddenly recollecting that the contessa was a stranger to her story, she was seized with new dismay, as the idea of what strange conjectures her words might give rise to struck on her mind. The amiable contessa seemed to read the internal conflict of her feelings, and taking her hand, said, with a look of sympathising pity, "I am inexpressibly grieved by beholding you thus afflicted and embarrassed, Signora di Berlotti; permit me to assure you that I am not actuated to profess sentiments of esteem and regard for you from any motive of idle curiosity, or the mean propensity of furnishing my friends with a repetition of those expressions which, in

the moments of surprise or distress, you may involuntarily utter; but as it would be affectation to appear unconscious of what I have heard, you will not regard me as officiously intrusive, when I now attempt to sooth your emotions, by promising to preserve with inviolable secrecy all that has just past; and suffer me to declare that I feel more regret than I can describe, in not being at liberty to acquaint you with even the very few circumstances known to me respecting this singular Signor Locendro."

Cecilia, in some measure composed by the persuasive gentleness of the contessa, acknowledged her sensibility of the considerate attentions of the latter; and added, that although she most earnestly desired to obtain some information relative to Orazio, whom she now called by the name of Locendro, yet she could not but respect the fidelity with which the contessa adhered to the assurances of secrecy which she had given to her friend.

"There is little merit in my so doing, my young friend; for the particulars with which I am acquainted are so trivial, and unimportant, that I dare venture to affirm that were it in my power to relate them to you you could gain no intelligence of any consequence from them. However, I will immediately write to my relation on this subject, and if I can obtain no further information of the Signor Locendro, I will

at least endeavour to procure liberty to repeat to you what has already been entrusted to myself."

Cecilia, although gratified extremely by this assurance, felt an involuntary tremor steal over her heart: she dreaded lest the promised enquiries of the contessa should injure Orazio, who, should he be indeed innocent, might thus be exposed to some danger or trouble; and now she faintly articulated an entreaty that the contessa would be as cautious as possible in her investigations. The contessa regarded her for a moment with an almost indiscernible, yet penetrating smile, and then promised to observe the utmost caution in her proceedings. She then asked Cecilia whether she was acquainted with the private history of the Rovenza family. "It is a strange, and I fear a rude question to ask," added the contessa, "but you are I know a stranger in the family, and although their history is extraordinary, you may not as yet have heard it. Allow me to ask if the marchesa has ever mentioned her sister to you."

Cecilia replied in the negative. The contessa sat musing for a moment, and then said, "I am not surprised that the Marchesa di Rovenza should avoid speaking on a subject which must be so harrowing to her feelings; and yet it appears singular that you should not have heard any particulars of one whom you so very much re-

semble. I never saw the lady to whom I allude, but I have often contemplated her picture with pleasure.---She was beautiful, and had exactly the same innocent expression about her mouth, and that softness in her eyes, which distinguishes your countenance."

"What was the name of that lady, madam?" enquired Cecilia, while the remembrance of the marchese's interruption to her when singing at Venice rushed suddenly to her mind.

"She was called the——"

The contessa was prevented from saying more by the appearence of the Marchesa di Rovenza, who pale, languid, and supported by the arm of the Signora della Albina, entered the room.

The marchesa looked surprised on perceiving Cecilia, and immediately discovering in the expressive features of the latter the strong traces of her recent agitation, she eagerly demanded what had so evidently affected her.

Cecilia replied by assuring her protectress that she would explain the occasion of her uneasiness as soon as that lady should grant her an interview for the purpose. The marchesa immediately requested that the explanation should take place after breakfast.

Cecilia now entreated permission to return to her chamber, and the marchesa, convinced that her still agitated appearance

was but too much calculated to expose her to remarks and observations, acquiesced in her wishes, after apologizing to the Contessa di Luzzana for the absence of her young *protegée*.

CHAP. VIII.

When Cecilia reached her apartment, she would have endeavoured to compose her spirits, and collect her disturbed thoughts preparatory to the approaching interview with the marchesa, but the most disagreeable intrusion of some female attendants with breakfast, aided to continue the perturbation of her mind by necessitating her to affect an appearance of calmness which she could not feel. With the utmost difficulty, she persuaded herself to swallow a single cupful of coffee, and then dismissed the servants with the breakfast equipage.

The anxious solicitude of the Marchesa di Rovenza to learn what new circumstance had so much discomposed her, soon brought her to the apartment of Cecilia, whom she found most anxiously awaiting her appearance.

A full explanation now ensued. Cecilia detailed every thing which had been said in

her interview with Orazio, and lamented in terms of the keenest anguish, that the incertitude and perplexity into which the almost daily occurrence of new mysteries plunged her, had now nearly deprived her of all hope of ever learning what had become of her beloved mother. The marchesa listened to her with the deepest attention, and when she ceased to speak, endeavoured to sooth her harassed mind by every consolation which her almost maternal affection for her young *protegée* could suggest But she made no particular comment on the relation she had received, and recommended Cecilia to preserve patience and secrecy till the six days, during which Orazio had implored her to remain silent, should be expired.

The poor Cecilia, however, could not decide to follow an advice which although so acceptable to her feelings, she yet dreaded to obey. "If," she said, "I yield to the entreaties of that mysterious young man, what fatal consequences may result to my mother from my taciturnity.—And yet in what manner can I serve her by revealing all my suspicions and fears to the marchesa. Tell me, madam, I entreat, what is your opinion of this singular Signor Orazio?—Do you not think he is an imposter, who, by the artful contrivances of the men with whom, I fear, he is privately associated, has succeeded in intruding himself into that exalted society, which furnishes

the best subjects for the rapacious plunder of those with whom he is connected?"

The marchesa now looked extremely uneasy—an expression of serious disapprobation transiently passed o'er her countenance, and, with impressive earnestness, she replied, "Were I inclined to give you my opinion on this subject, I fear it would avail you little.—Your prejudices against this young man appear to be so fixed, that I must suppose that what I might say could not alter them.—I will readily allow that he seems to be as much enveloped in mystery as yourself.---But before Cecilia di Berlotti judges so pertinaciously from appearances, she ought to reflect that there are many strange and unaccountable circumstances in her own history, which are as much calculated to render herself an object of suspicion in the eyes of others, as Orazio Angelo, or the Signor Locendro, may be in her's."

Astonished, confounded, and hurt to the soul by this speech, Cecilia sat immovable and silent. The marchesa, after a short pause, resumed the discourse, and, in a gentler tone, continued: "You are, I perceive, both offended and grieved by the freedom of my language.—You will one day learn the motives which have compelled me to speak to you thus.—Yet give yourself a moment's reflection, and you must perceive the necessity of taking my advice.—In observing the silence, to which

you have been enjoined, you run no hazard. —Were you this moment to reveal all to the marchese, what could he do more to serve you than he is now actually performing.—Is not every possible engine now already employed to apprehend Guicciardini and his bandit horde, and in no other method could my lord attempt the recovery of the signora your mother, who, however, may not be in the power of the robber Angelo. Recollect the young man's pointed reference to the oath by which Guicciardini bound himself to become your *protector.* Facts, which I allow are almost incredible, are related of the robber Angelo's observance of his oaths.---It is well known that there is a singular principle of fidelity sometimes cherished by these men, who, although the veriest outcast of society---the sons of plunder and violence---often affect preposterous claims to the name of honour, while their general actions are in utter contradiction to every principle of justice, honour, or humanity.---On such a wild chimerical honour is doubtless founded the generous deeds of Angelo Guicciardini, and there is a possibility that the love of such fame as may be thus acquired, induces him to assist the oppressed.--It is therefore not wholly improbable that he may really be your friend.---Accidental circumstances might have informed him that the Signora di Berlotti had some powerful and secret enemies, and every mystery in his

conduct, instead of proving him the agent of that foe, may rather evince his having attempted to counteract the plots laid for the destruction of your mother and yourself.—One thing, however, appears certain, that is, that the young man, whom you call Orazio Angelo, is *apparently* connected with, and in the confidence of the robber Angelo.---How far he may be so in reality time only can disclose.---But it is both useless and absurd to waste time in conjectures respecting his circumstances.---All that can now be done, is to wait with patience the expiration of the six days, when, if he does not return, we must pursue a different course."

"And do you, madam, suppose that the words of the Signora Orazio implied any intention of endeavouring to discover the situation of my mother?"

"Assuredly," replied the marchesa. "Yet,---certainly you do not believe my mother to be in the power of Angelo Guicciardini, madam?" "That is a point on which I cannot pretend to decide.---It is impossible to say that such a circumstance is wholly improbable."

"Merciful power!" murmured Cecilia, in a tone of inward agony. "Then the letter which I have resigned, under the idea of its being a forgery, may have been written by my dear hapless parent" "Your fears deprive you of your good sense and recollection, my poor Cecilia,"

said the marchesa, tenderly, "or you would not forget that the letter to which you allude mentions Orazio as the preserver and protector of your mother; but that affirmation is false, and therefore at best that letter may have been only a device of Angelo Guicciardini to inform you of the signora's safety, without shocking you too much by the too abrupt intelligence that to himself she was indebted for her liberation from her foes.---His sudden appearance in the temple might have been caused by his wish of giving you further information on the subject ---But still all this is but conjecture, and may merely tend to inspire you with most erroneous ideas.---In such strange and complex circumstances all that can possibly be done at present is to maintain the requested silence till the termination of the time stated by the young man for the period of his return."

Cecilia, but too mournfully convinced that it was, indeed, in vain to indulge the hope of being able to unravel the complicated entanglements of such mysterious occurrences, mentally aspirated a petition for the protecting guidance of heaven, and informed the marchesa that she would endeavour to follow her advice, and entreated her forgiveness for having so long withstood the force of the just and considerate representations of that lady, whose experience and knowledge of the world had formed her a competent judge of the circumstances.

The marchesa received the acquiescence of Cecilia in her wishes with looks of unrestrained satisfaction, and while she testified her approbation in the warmest terms of commendation, she ventured to predict that the happiest result would attend her prudent resolves.

Cecilia, however, could not entirely participate in the hopes which the marchesa professed to indulge.---She could not place any very great reliance on the intentions of Orazio, although her heart whispered but too much in his favour.--Perhaps it was her very consciousness of being rather inclined to believe him capable of honourable and generous actions which made her fear to yield too much to the impulse of her heart, which certainly beat with no very faint emotion at times on the mention of his name. She sighed, and while she gratefully acknowledged the condescending kindness of the marchesa, she could not forbear uttering some severe comments on Orazio's appearing at the Villa di Luzzana as the Signor Locendro.

Again the marchesa appeared disconcerted and chagrined. "It is in vain," she said, "to attempt to explain, by the mere aid of conjecture, circumstances that are so enwrapped in mystery.---If the Bishop of Verona, who is one of the most sensible and pious men of the present times, has been imposed upon, no wonder that others should become this young man's dupes.---But be Orazio Angelo, or Locendro, no

matter which---who he may, it is certain that he takes the liveliest interest in your concerns, and if he succeeds in the attempt, which I am fully inclined to believe he is at present engaged in, he will undoubtedly possess some claims on your forbearance; and therefore we will let this subject rest for the present, and look forward with hope towards the future."

The countenance of the marchesa now assumed a more serious cast, and she added: "But I had almost forgotten to inform you that we return to the Villa di Rovenza to-day.---And now, Cecilia, I am about to demand a proof of your courage, and your friendship for myself.--Circumstances which I cannot now explain, will not allow me to offer you any other apartments in the villa than those you have hitherto occupied; but the door leading into the oratory shall be immediately closed up; and, if you think proper, one of my attendants shall always sleep in your anti-room, provided you are afraid to suffer your own servant to be near you.---*I* fear that the superstition of such a young woman may add to your own uneasiness---but, be assured, that if you again experience the least cause for alarm, no consideration whatever shall influence me to request your longer continuance in those apartments."

Cecilia turned pale at the recollection of the last night she had spent in the Villa di Rovenza; but justly concluding that some important reasons must have prevented the

marchesa's offering her another apartment, and perceiving so much distress and anxiety now depicted on the features of that lady, the amiable girl readily professed herself resigned to the necessity of remaining in her usual apartment.

The looks of the marchesa expressed the most grateful approbation, and after once more entreating her young *protegée* to hope for a successful termination of the plans which she imagined Orazio had engaged in on her account, at length left the room.

Cecilia, however, experienced but few of the soothing suggestions of hope: her mind was torn by the most contradictory and distracting feelings, while the consciousness that it was in vain for her to attempt to fathom by reflection the deep mysteries which surrounded her, only added to her distress. The light in which the marchesa had placed the conduct of Angelo Guicciardini---her pleadings in favour of Orazio, Cecilia now considered as equally strange and inexplicable.---If, however, Angelo had really been actuated in his mysterious proceedings by some secret motives which inclined him to assist and protect her mother and herself, how fatally might she not have erred in coinciding with the Marchese di Rovenza in his opinions relative to that singular robber being one of the agents of the Count de Weilburgh, and to what unknown hazard and dangers might not her imprudence have exposed

the unfortunate Orazio!---Cecilia shuddered with fear and horror at the afflictive idea that she had too probably hastened the destruction of those who were most inclined to save her beloved parent from the power of her mysterious foes. Every circumstance that had hitherto been considered by her as proofs of Angelo's being engaged in the plans of the Count de Weilburgh, now seemed to bring to her mind evidences of his innocence and good intentions; and, with trembling anguish of heart, she returned to the opinion that Orazio at least could not be an unworthy character.---It was true, that he seemed to hold some strange correspondence with the robber Angelo; but there certainly existed a possibility that the motives for that correspondence might be innocent, and if so, how cruel and injust had all her recent suspicions been. Doubly poignant were now her emotions of regret and self-condemnation, and with tears of keen affliction, she bewailed the strange uncertainty of her fate which plunged her into the unavoidable commission of so many errors.

When this burst of grief and anguish had somewhat subsided, she felt her spirits calmed by the relief that her tears had afforded; her thoughts soon became more collected; just consideration evinced to her the folly and inutility of suffering the violence of her feelings to overcome her reasoning faculties, when she was certainly in a situation that demanded the utmost

exertions of judgment and prudence. The conviction of her own weakness was attended by the earnest desire of conquering those sudden impulses of alarm and sorrow, which on every new trouble and perplexity deprived her of the power of reflecting with a proper degree of composure, or of rationally deciding how to act in the moment of trial. But Cecilia, although her education had been infinitely superior to that usually bestowed upon females, was not formed to encounter and contend with events so awfully singular and mysterious as those which had latterly attended her. She could have borne with unshrinking fortitude and pious resignation all the sorrows and humiliations of chilling adversity, and could have eaten the frugal meat of patient, lowly industry with gratitude, and have slept the sleep of the innocent on the hard couch of poverty; but the circumstances in which she found herself involved, were of a nature which she had never been prepared to expect or meet with in life; and her early years, her total want of knowledge of the world, and her artless inexperience, left her completely destitute of that discrimination between truth and artifice, which she now found it was so necessary to possess. The guileless ingenuousness of her disposition rendered her but too susceptible of receiving any impression which the designing and crafty might find it necessary to fix upon her mind; yet when the first perturbation of

her feelings was over, she generally formed her opinion on the conduct of others, with some degree of accuracy and justice; and as such was the case, it is not singular that her calmer retrospection of the recent behaviour of the Marchesa di Rovenza led her into a train of reflections both distressing to herself, and rather unfavourable to that lady.

The earnest anxiety which the marchesa had manifested to conceal from her lord, and every other person whatever, the fact of the supposed Signor Locendro's being the mysterious Orazio Angelo; her own affected belief that they could not be the same person; her having made no remark on the subject, on being convinced that Cecilia was right in this point; together with her avowed conjectures that Angelo Guicciardini, and the young Orazio were rather interested for, than against the Signora her mother, were circumstances that appeared to be no less singular than surprising. What the motives could be that had influenced her protectress to speak and act as she did, was undoubtedly beyond the comprehension of Cecilia; but that this conduct partook equally of mystery and deception was evident. Why the marchesa should wish to hold the marchese in ignorance of a circumstance so apparently necessary for him to be made acquainted with, as that of Orazio's appearing at the Villa di Luzzana as the Swiss Locendro, seemed wholly unaccountable, unless the

marchesa was privately acquainted with the history of the young man, and had some important reason for concealing, even from her lord, her knowledge on the subject. But this Cecilia imagined could not be the case; for although her protectress had appeared to think very favorably of Orazio, she had nevertheless faintly admitted the possibility of his being an impostor, and had also allowed the apparent existence of some strong connexion between him and Angelo Guicciardini. At all events, strange as were the language and proceedings of the marchesa in this affair, it was but too clear that she had deviated from becoming candour with her lord, and by so doing, implied that she considered him with a degree of fear or distrust, which placed his character in no very favourable point of view.

Cecilia's reflections, on this undissembled want of confidence in her lord, which the marchesa had displayed, now became of the most painful kind, and a thousand wild ideas rushed on her mind; the recollection of the horrible spectre which had been visible to her in the oratory; the mysterious words uttered by the Signora della Albina, relative to the friend who had been torn from her by a death both sudden and unaccounted for; the well known fact that the private history of the Rovenza family was marked by some strange and mysterious occurrences;—the caution of not alluding to past events in the presence

of the marchese, — were circumstances which now dwelt on the memory of Cecilia with the most impressive force, and combined to whisper to her alarmed imagination the most dark and fearful conjectures. The transient dawn of composure which had beamed on her mind now once more vanished, and all the perplexity and inquietude which usually oppressed her spirits returned.

To end, or at least to ameliorate the overwhelming anxieties, doubts and fears, which now added to her troubles, Cecilia decided to request of the Signora della Albina some account of the former history of the marchese; and while forming this resolve, she recollected the assertion of the Contessa di Luzzana relative to her own resemblance to the sister of the marchesa, and this remembrance served to strengthen her determination of endeavouring to learn the history of the family under whose protection she resided, as early as circumstances would permit.

CHAP. IX.

The entrance of an attendant belonging to the contessa, who now came to assist Cecilia in adjusting her dress, reminded the latter of the necessity of endeavouring to forbear any further reflections on subjects which were so truly calculated to

distress and agitate her mind, and would impart to her countenance an expression by no means adapted to the gay assemblage she must join at dinner. In order therefore to escape the observation that a melancholy and dejected air would inevitably subject her to, she essayed to conceal the sadness of her heart under the ill-assumed mask of affected composure, but the grief and perturbation which internally preyed on her spirits were still apparent through the pensive placidity which marked her features. Several new guests were present, but Cecilia scarcely perceived this; her thoughts were too much pre-occupied; and while, with a mechanical politeness, she endeavoured to avoid offending those who were solicitous to pay her the most pointed attentions, she was nearly insensible to their assiduities.

The watchful jealousy of Leonardo di Rovenza, however, preserved her from some part of the importunate civilities intended her; and during the remainder of their short stay at the Villa di Luzzana, he became almost her shadow. At length the moment of departure arrived; and Cecilia bade adieu to the amiable Contessa di Luzzana, with a degree of pensive regret, in which the latter appeared unfeignedly to participate.

Cecilia, still most assiduously attended by Leonardo, was following the marchesa into the carriage, when a gentleman on horseback galloped up to the portico, and

loudly addressing the Marchese di Rovenza, who was at that moment bidding adieu to a friend and descending the steps, exclaimed, in a voice of exultation, "Angelo Guicciardini is toiled, and ere long all Venice will witness the end of that famous robber!"

These words sounded like a thunder-peal in the ears of Cecilia. Involuntarily she grasped the arm of Leonardo, with convulsive quickness. A death-like chill stole over her trembling frame, and she was nearly sinking in the earth, when Leonardo, alarmed and surprised at her situation, demanded with so much eager anxiety whether she was indisposed, that the tone of his voice, so impassioned and anxious, recalled her to sensibility. To his reiterated enquiries she had not power to reply, but attempted to avoid further observation by making a faint essay to move towards the carriage; and Leonardo, perceiving with how much repugnance she shrunk from his proposal for her to return into the villa till she was rather more recovered, now assisted her to ascend the splendid vehicle, and then flew to obtain some restoratives.

The marchesa, Ottavania, and the Signora della Albina, were already in the coach, but not one of the ladies noticed the indisposition of Cecilia. The darkness of the evening prevented her discerning their countenances, but scarcely was she seated, ere her hand was silently pressed

by one of the marchesa's, whose trembling chilling touch seemed to intimate that she too was deeply affected.

This was a new source of instantaneous surprise and concern to Cecilia, but there was then no proper opportunity for remarks and explanations, and she was under the necessity of concealing the tumultuous agitation of her own feelings, by observing a profound silence. A servant, who waited on horseback beside the carriage to receive the directions of his lady, was now commanded by the marchesa to say that the coach might proceed, and they drove off before the return of Leonardo, who was to accompany the marchese and the Count Carraci in another carriage.

During the drive home, Ottavania was the only one who spoke, and then only to make some trifling observation on the impatience for her return, which, she supposed, her friends the Bellinzettos were enduring, as they had not chosen to accompany her to the Villa di Luzzana.

When at length they reached the Villa di Rovenza, Cecilia preferred retiring immediately to her apartments, disagreeable as they now were, to the restraint which she must endure were she to remain to supper.

The society of Lodelli, who, after a day's separation only, was as much rejoiced to behold her dear young mistress as if she had been absent an age, together with the important concerns that occupied

her thoughts, prevented Cecilia's feeling that degree of terror which she had anticipated and dreaded would overwhelm her spirits on again entering her apartments.

For the first time, Lodelli's volubiliyt was truly acceptable to her lady, who, dreading the influence of too troublesome and unavailing reflections, endeavoured for the present to banish them from her mind, and therefore listened to the prattle of her attendant with all the attention she could command. But the recent intelligence of Angelo's being taken had given her a shock which, together with the occurrences that had taken place at the Villa di Luzzana, baffled all her efforts to attain any degree of composure, and she was fast relapsing into an agony of distress and doubt, when the Signora della Albina entered the room.

The significant look of the signora was a sufficient intimation to Cecilia to dismiss her attendant, and she immediately ordered Lodelli from the apartment.

"I am come," said the signora, as she now took a chair beside that of Cecilia, "at the desire of the Marchesa di Rovenza, to caution her young *protègée* in the most solemn manner not to suffer any thing she may to-morrow hear respecting the Signor Lecendro, or Angelo Guicciardini, to affect her feelings so much as to occasion her to betray any interest she may feel in the fate of either of those persons."

An ashy paleness blanched the cheek of Cecilia as she listened to this warning; and when the signora forbore to speak, she was prevented by the secret dread which revived in her heart, from enquiring the necessity for her to be so cautious in guarding her feelings from observation.

The signora, deeply sighing, arose, and faintly breathing a few consolatory and friendly expressions, calculated more to sink than elevate the spirits of Cecilia, withdrew, and as she departed directed Lodelli, who waited in the anti-room, to return to her lady; whom this affectionate servant now found in tears.

In vain poor Lodelli tried every effort, which her honest and simple attachments could inspire, to soothe the heartfelt sorrow of Cecilia, whose mind was now compleatly subdued by the harrowing mystery of her situation, and the tortures of suspensive doubts and terrors. Reflection and conjectures on the singular circumstance in which she was involved, she now entirely rejected, as equally misleading and useless, and with the conviction that patience and caution were her only resources under her present calamities, she raised her tearful eyes imploringly to that beneficent power, who alone can impart to the soul of the afflicted that holy hope and confidence in his protecting care, which enables them to submit with resignation to misfortune.

For the first time for many hours, Cecilia now experienced some portion of that

calm and meek reliance on the mercy of the most high, so sweetly soothing and consolatory to the heart of piety, and of which the agitation, terror, and confusion in which the recent occurrence had plunged her mind, had, in a great measure, deprived her.

With returning calmness revived the conviction that it is from religion only that we may expect to derive fortitude in the hour of trial, or perseverance in virtue; and Cecilia, while the fervour of piety animated her soul, resolved to prepare herself to meet, without shrinking, every future difficulty and danger which it might be her lot to encounter; and mingled her prayers for her beloved parent's safety with petitions for that constancy in pious dependence upon the guardian providence of heaven, which she felt could equally shield her from danger and console her in trouble.

With a mind thus fortified by fervent piety, Cecilia lost almost all terror of the awful vision she had beheld in the oratory, and passed the night without experiencing any new occasion for alarm; while the faithful Lodelli, conscious that any cause for fear of supernatural beings had ever occurred in the apartments, remained on a couch in the chamber, and waked only to watch the short slumbers of Cecilia.

CHAP. X.

THE next morning Cecilia arose with her mind still renovated by the influence of religion; and although a slight tremor agitated her frame as she descended to breakfast, yet she strenuously essayed to acquire and maintain her fortitude, even while she was anticipating the probability of hearing some accounts of Orazio, or Guicciardini, which might be but too well calculated to involve her in deeper distress and uncertainty.

Happily she encountered not such a trial. In the breakfast room she found only the Marchesa di Rovenza, the Signora Lucilia Bellinzetto, and the Signora della Albina; the elder Bellinzetto partaking the morning repast in the apartments of Ottavania.

The marchese, Leonardo, and the Signor Carraci, Cecilia soon learnt had departed for Venice at a very early hour in the morning; but as she knew that this excursion thither had been decided upon some days back, she was not pained by the idea that any particular circumstance had summoned them away.

Before breakfast was concluded, the arrival of a stranger was announced, and on his introduction, Cecilia was equally surprised and gratified by beholding the Father Ascollini.

The marchesa received him with cour-

tesy; but Ascollini, yielding to the imploring anxiety visible in the eyes of Cecilia, and his own feelings, retired with her into another apartment, where, in reply to her eager and anxious questions whether he had as yet heard any thing of her mother, he sorrowfully informed her that he had not been so fortunate as to have received any intelligence respecting the Signora di Berlotti, and that he had come to the Villa di Rovenza for the sole purpose of seeing herself, and learning whether *she* had obtained any information relative to the signora, or the persons who had carried her off.

The transient gleam of expectant hope, which his appearance had created in the bosom of Cecilia, now died away in disappointment, but yet she felt gratified by his presence, and caught with avidity this opportunity of declaring to this respected tutor of her happiest years all she had suffered, and all she dreaded.

Without reserve she now related to the father almost every circumstance that had occurred to her from the moment she was placed under the protection of the Rovenza family; and Ascollini listened with a degree of earnest interest that prevented his interrupting her.—Cecilia, however, hesitated when she arrived at that part of her little relation in which it would be necessary to mention her meeting with Orazio under the name of Locendro, at the Villa di Luzzana, and after a momentary pause, ingenuously informed the father that she

must for the present suppress a circumstance, on which she was bound by serious obligations to be silent for awhile.

Ascollini started and frowned; surprise and severe reproof were mingled in the penetrating look with which he observed her, while in a tone of voice which she had never before heard him use, he demanded what obligation could be sufficiently binding to compel her to the most culpable reserve with one, who, from his former situation in her family, had undoubted claims of her full confidence.

Cecilia felt the full force of the father's observation, yet a reluctance, which she could not conquer, affected her mind at the idea of confessing the secret of Orazio till the expiration of the six days.---Confused and distressed, she did not immediately reply, and before she could frame an excuse to avoid any further explanation with Ascollini, the Marchesa di Rovenza entered the room.

She looked pale and agitated, and scarcely apologized for her intrusion. Cecilia fancied that the father Ascollini eyed the marchesa with an oblique and singular glance, but it was so transient that the expression was hardly perceived before it vanished, and was succeeded by his usual look. It was evident, however, that the sudden entrance of the marchesa had slightly disconcerted him, as it prevented his importuning Cecilia to reveal to him the circumstance which he so much desired to know, but

unwilling to wholly relinquish his attempts to induce her to confide to him the incident so mysteriously withheld, he assumed the privilege of an old and confidential friend, and appealed to the marchesa whether it was prudent and consistent with that nice sense of delicacy and propriety which a young female should ever preserve, to conceal from one of her truest friends, and one, who from his long intimacy with her parent, had so much right to require unreserved confidence, any event which had occurred to her in her present singular situation.

The Marchesa di Rovenza turned paler as the father spoke; and her voice was scarcely audible or articulate as she replied —" Cecilia di Berlotti best knows by what obligations she is enjoined to secrecy on the subject on which the Father Ascollini demands so much explicit sincerity, and doubtless well considers what might be the probable result of her want of fidelity to her promise." These words were accompanied with a glance to Cecilia, so significantly expressive, that the lovely girl could not but understand that the marchesa wished her to persevere in her silence: nor was the Father Ascollini less sensible of that lady's meaning. He seemed astonished and confounded, but respect, or some other cause, induced him to forbear noticing how much he was surprised and chagrined otherwise than by looks; which, however, were quickly corrected, and he contented

himself by gravely uttering a few expressions of regret that his young pupil should have so erroneously fettered her sincerity with promises to keep that a secret, which the nature of her circumstances, he imagined, might have rendered it much more prudent to divulge; but as there was now no remedy in the case, he must even submit to necessity, and enquire no further till she should be at liberty to speak to him without reserve.

Ascollini now enquired whether he might be permitted to pay his respects to the Marchese di Rovenza, and on being informed that the latter had gone that morning to Venice, he expressed much satisfaction at that circumstance, as he should soon have an opportunity he said of seeing the marchese there, and added, that he should depart for Venice immediately. The marchesa requested him to pass the day at the Villa di Rovenza, but the latter protested that urgent business called him so speedily to Venice, that he must unavoidably decline her invitation, and refusing to take any refreshment, he coldly bade Cecilia farewel; and after promising to send any intelligence which he should happen to learn respecting the Signora di Berlotti, he took a formally polite leave of the marchesa, and left the villa to proceed on his journey.

Cecilia, well accustomed to the manners of the Father Ascollini, perceived that he was much more hurt and displeased by her reserve and taciturnity than he seemed

willing to acknowledge, and she felt involuntarily grieved and alarmed at her own temerity in having concealed from him a circumstance of so much importance, as that of her recently beholding Orazio Angelo.

Her looks so fully expressed her uneasiness when the father quitted the room, that the marchesa instantly understood her thoughts, and after observing her for a moment with anxiety and concern, she said--"You are unhappy, Cecilia, at the necessity which has compelled you to be less ingenuous than usual with the Father Ascollini; when you know him as well as *I* do, your regrets on this subject may cease."

Cecilia gazed on the marchesa in amazement; for the recoiling shudder with which that lady spoke of her own knowledge of Ascollini, implied no very favourable opinion of the father's character.

"Then you have seen the Father Ascollini prior to to-day, madam?" articulated the trembling girl.

"Seen him!" sighed the marchesa; "Oh, no——but I have——"she hesitated, and then, with impressive seriousness, she added, "Cecilia, this is not a time for explanations—suffice it that I *know* Ascollini.—Believe me your friend, and henceforward as you value your own repose, judge not, nor undertake any step whatever without first consulting me.—In the meanwhile endeavour to regain your composure,

and rest confident on the assurance that you have friends who are deeply interested for you, and whose endeavours will be unceasingly exerted in your favour.—And now," continued the marchesa, "we must essay to banish all mournful and unavailing retrospections, and to wait with patience the expiration of the time which must elapse ere we shall see the *Signor Locendro*.—And recollect, I cannot dispense with your society; for I cannot possibly perceive that any good can result from your immuring yourself in your chamber, merely to indulge in distressing surmises and reflections which cannot alter nor amend your situation, instead of seeking to acquire that command of your feelings, and submission to the will of heaven, which various circumstances may soon call upon you to exert."

Cecilia, in reply, assured the marchesa that she had already adopted the resolution of attempting to attain that fortitude and patient resignation which her situation did indeed so imperiously command her to acquire; and she promised to suppress as much as possible the painful anxiety which had hitherto harassed her spirits, as well as to forbear all further enquiries and conjectures which might be displeasing to her protectress till the period when the promised return of Orazio should either bring her hope and consolation, or terminate all doubt and incertitude respecting her parent.

"And as a reward for so prudent and

proper a forbearance," replied the marchesa, "I will acquaint my young friend with the history of my early life.---It is no very common one, and will serve to elucidate many things in my present conduct, which may now appear to be so mysterious and unaccountable."

Cecilia acknowledged herself most sincerely grateful for this promise, and at the same time evinced the sincerity of her own intentions to endeavour to combat a grief so unavailing to the welfare of her mother, by repeating her determination not to shun society again, unless some fatal event should compel her to do so. The tremulous tone of Cecilia's voice, however, the paleness of her looks, as she fearfully alluded to the possibility of soon hearing perhaps some *dreadful* tidings of the fate of her beloved mother, proved how much she expected she should suffer in her attempts to appear tranquil during an interval which would unavoidably excite the utmost impatience and anxiety in her mind. These apprehensions, however, were not realised; for although Cecilia certainly endured some moments of the most frightful anticipation of the result of Orazio's return, yet she was, even unconsciously to herself, supported by the soft and soothing whisper of that hope with which her still continuing confidence in heaven inspired her.

Undisturbed by any particular occurrence in the villa, four days passed slowly

away. Neither the marchese, his son, nor the Count Carraci, were yet returned from Venice; and as no variety of company was received in their absence, and Ottavania and her friends seldom intruded on the marchesa, Cecilia was not exposed to the trial of encountering any unpleasant domestic scenes, nor the bustle of those large and gay parties in which it would be so necessary for her to assume the mask of chearfulness, in order to screen herself from the gaze of prying curiosity. As she sometimes pensively congratulated herself on this occasion, she could scarcely avoid some reflections on the successful management with which the Marchese di Rovenza had contrived to conceal in part from his acquaintance all the circumstances of her real situation, especially as it was known to the Signoras Bellinzettos. His numerous household, she knew, he could easily *command* to silence, and that they would not dare to disobey that command, or utter the slightest intimation of their knowledge of any circumstance which their lord had enjoined them to preserve with secrecy; but that the Bellinzettos. or even Ottavania herself, should not have suffered some hints respecting her to have escaped them, appeared to be most extraordinary.—Had Cecilia known that self interest was the motive for the silence of those ladies, she would no longer have been surprised at their not having given all that notoriety to what they knew of her story which the

marchese himself was at such trouble to prevent its obtaining.

CHAP. XI.

At length the wished for, and yet dreaded day arrived, which was either to bring Orazio Angelo to the Villa di Rovenza, or, by his absence, give to Cecilia and the marchesa the fearful intimation of some fatal termination of his but half revealed attempt; and each now experienced all the tremulous agitation, anxiety, and fears, which the near approach of such a moment could not fail to produce.

With a constancy which proved of how much her mind was capable, Cecilia had, for the past days, sedulously avoided all conjecture relative to what might be the plans of Orazio to discover the signora her mother; and consoled by the Marchesa di Rovenza's repeatedly avowed belief that he was really occupied by an attempt of that nature, and the supposition that Angelo Guicciardini was rather a friend than an enemy to the Signora di Berlotti, Cecilia indulged herself chiefly in listening to the suggestions of hope, and in mental prayers for the success of those schemes that had for their object the restoration of her beloved parent. In thus attending to the consolatory idea that the mysterious Orazio was, indeed, engaged in the arduous task

of discovering and releasing her mother, Cecilia did not consider herself as yielding an idle credulity to a wild and visionary expectation. The singular circumstances that had of late occurred to her, led her to imagine that nothing more improbable could possibly befall her, than what had already happened. The inexplicability of Orazio's character and situation, appeared not to offer any proof of his not possessing either the means or the power of undertaking such an exploit. The manner in which he had inadvertently alluded to the robber Angelo as the probable friend of the Signora di Berlotti, rather seemed to imply some secret knowledge of Guicciardini's sentiments; whether she was in the power of the Count di Weilburgh, or of the robber himself, there existed at least a very strong presumption, that as the young Orazio might be privately acquainted with Angelo Guicciardini's plans and intentions, he would find little difficulty in his efforts to ascertain the real situation of the signora, and encounter but few obstacles in accomplishing her release. These flattering and soothing conjectures, which Cecilia cherished with all the tenacity of hope, reluctant to banish the cheering prospects of its own creation, were not, however, unmixed with dark and fearful forbodings that overshadowed the scene. Regret and alarm for having so precipitately confessed to the Marchese di Rovenza that it was, indeed, no other than Angelo Guicciardini whom

she had seen in the temple, but too often clouded the mind of Cecilia with affliction; and when the apprehension that she had probably betrayed those who meant only to serve her parent and herself to that awful justice which the general tenor of their lives had exposed them to, she suffered acutely all that contention of feeling which inevitably resulted from the consciousness that although she had acted right in acknowledging the vicinity of such a man as the robber Angelo to the Villa di Rovenza, yet there existed a probability that she had hastened the dreadful but merited fate of him who deserved at least from her hands only gratitude and forbearance. And while these painful reflections intruded on her mind, the shuddering recollection of the stranger's words to the Marchese di Rovenza as the latter was leaving the Villa di Luzzana, incessantly recurred.—If, however, Angelo Guicciardini was already in the power of justice, such a circumstance did not appear likely to prevent his acknowledging all that he was acquainted with respecting the situation of the Signora di Berlotti, nor from confessing his motives for wishing to befriend her, if, indeed, the latter was the case; and if on the other hand this man had escaped the toil spread by the Venetian police to entrap him, Orazio, by being acquainted with the secret haunts to which he would probably fly to conceal himself, might trace him to his place of retreat, and still pro-

cure the intelligence he desired. As to the full nature of Orazio's connexion with Angelo Guicciardini, this was a subject on which Cecilia did not dare to dwell even for a moment: this singular young man appeared to be more than *protected* by the robber Angelo, and should he really be one of the associates of the daring Guicciardini, he was certainly as amenable to justice as that famous outlaw. No force of expression would be adequate to give an idea of Cecilia's feelings whenever this latter consideration pressed on her mind. It was true, the sentiments with which she had first beheld the young Orazio, when distinguished by her mother's favour and friendship, were much changed by the point of view in which she had latterly been accustomed to consider him, although her timid affection had been revived by the belief of his having been the rescuer of her mother from the villains who had torn her from the cottage on the Lago Maggiore; yet her own fears, and the representations of the Marchese di Rovenza, had so strongly convinced her that this young man, in conjunction with the robber Angelo, was one of the agents of the Count di Weilburgh, that her prepossessions in favour of Orazio had been very much diminished, and her interview with him at the Villa di Luzzana was not of a nature to incline her to consider him otherwise than as a most mysterious and equivocal character, from whom the delicacy of her mind taught her

to shrink in fear and suspicion.—Cecilia was of a disposition to indulge affection for a worthy object with all the tender enthusiasm of a virtuous and feeling heart; but it was impossible for her well regulated mind to cherish such sentiments for one whom she could not feel convinced was not wholly undeserving: and although she trembled with painful apprehensions at the idea of the hazards to which Orazio was but too probably exposed in his attempts to discover and free her mother, yet she endured none of those excruciating and heartful pangs which love only *can* inflict when we distractedly conceive the possibility of danger assailing a beloved object.—Her mental sufferings were, however, sufficiently acute, notwithstanding her exertion to attain that degree of fortitude and patience she wished to possess, as so consonant to the dictates of religion and reason.—But in one point only did she fully succeed, and that was in the resolution she preserved of not attempting to develope, by perplexing surmise, any of the mysteries with which she was environed, and although as usual she found a source of incessant regret in the circumstance of the signora her mother not having entrusted her with her history, she no longer suffered her mind to dwell on the subject with that tenacious anxiety and sorrow that had hitherto attended her reflections on that unfortunate omission.

In these just and rational efforts to

strengthen her mind and compose her spirits, Cecilia was strenuously aided by the Marchesa di Rovenza, who of late never suffered her to be long absent from her sight; but now that the very day that Orazio's promised return was arrived, neither could suppress, nor wholly conceal the tumultuous agitations of their minds, and more than once encountered the prying glances of Ottavania fixed on themselves, with the most marking expression of curiosity.

The morning, the noon, however, passed on, and brought not Orazio, nor any tidings of him, and the evening was fast closing and still he came not. Cecilia could scarcely support the agony of her feelings, and the alarms and perturbations of the marchesa was but too visible in her countenance. Neither dared to speak to the other, lest their mutual trouble should be encreased by the confession of their fears.

At length the dark shades of night succeeding to the twilight hour, seemed to deprive them of every ray of hope, and Cecilia, concluding from the non-appearance of Orazio, that he was now indeed no more, was just on the point of retiring to her apartment, to conceal in solitude her despondence and affliction, when the arrival of the marchese from Venice was announced, and in the next moment he entered the saloon, followed by the Count

Carraci, Leonardo, and the Father Ascollini.

Cecilia was obliged to remain on the entrance of this group; but the moment she cast her eyes on the marchese, she was struck with involuntary dismay at his wild and disordered appearance, and still more so by his words; for scarcely had he entered than he exclaimed, "Guicciardini has escaped, and I have no further hopes of discovering in what way he has disposed of the Signora di Berlotti, nor of punishing him for that daring act."

Cecilia had not sufficient command of her agitation to be capable of requesting any particulars of the affair; but the marchesa faintly articulated a wish to learn how the escape of the robber Angelo had been effected.

The marchese, throwing himself on a sofa, appeared too much chagrined to have any inclination to reply: and the Father Ascollini begged permission to give the marchesa an account of the event, but before the lady could accept his offer, the marchese started up, and in a tone of querulous impatience, cried, "Your curiosity, madam, will be gratified at the expence of the Signora Cecilia di Berlotti, who may, perhaps, be considerably shocked when she now learns that the infamous Angelo Guicciardini was prevented from falling into the hands of justice by a young assassin, whom the Father Ascollini posi-

tively asserts to be the hypocritical and specious Orazio Angelo, whom the Signora di Berlotti, with so much incautious folly, admitted to her friendship and her house. But this arch deceiver has paid the forfeit of his temerity, in daring to oppose the officers of justice, with the loss of his life, and that he fell by their hands in the scuffle is at least one consolation for my disappointed hopes of terminating the career of Guicciardini."

The marchese had not wholly concluded his speech when Cecilia fainted, and the marchesa, who, while her lord spoke, had gazed on him with an almost frenzied eye, now exclaimed, in wild and piercing accents—

"Lost! wretched Rovenza! thou hast murdered the son of *Udina!*"

The unhappy marchese stood transfixed with horror at these dreadful words: the dews of death appeared to settle on his pallid countenance, and his vacant eyes seemed fixed in the gaze of despair; until with a lengthened groan, expressing more than mortal anguish, he fell lifeless into the arms of Count Carraci, who, struck with the frantic cry of the marchesa, had left the fainting Cecilia to the care of the Signora della Albina, who, with Ascollini and Leonardo, had flown to the assistance of the hapless, lovely girl, and approached the marchese just at the moment of his falling.

A scene of surprise, distress, and con-

fusion ensued. The Marchesa di Rovenza, now in strong convulsions, and her lord still insensible, were conveyed to separate apartments, and messengers were sent off for physicians; yet no person knew how to account for the situations of the marchese and marchesa, for happily none had heard the expressions uttered by the latter, the attention of those in the saloon having been at that instant engaged by Cecilia's fainting. Her swoon, however, was not of long continuance, but reviving just as the marchesa was borne convulsively shrieking from the apartment, there was the greatest difficulty to prevent her relapsing into a state of insensibility; and when at length she was capable of articulating a few words, her wild and disordered expressions alluded so strongly to the occasion of her fainting, and betrayed such a heart-felt interest in the hapless fate of Orazio, that the Signora della Albina caused her to be conveyed to her chamber, lest in the anguish of the moment she should incautiously utter *that* which she should afterwards wish unrevealed.

When rather more composed, the unhappy Cecilia was, at her own earnest desire, left solely to the care of Lodelli; and on leaving her the Signora della Albina proceeded to the apartments of the Marchesa di Rovenza, whom she found but just recovering from the violence of her fits.

The marchesa's first enquiry, on being

perfectly restored to sensibility, was for Cecilia; and the anxiously-terrified expression of her features, as she directed her question to the Signora della Albina, explained all her fears to the latter, who immediately assured her friend that she had taken every possible precaution to prevent Cecilia from betraying any thing of importance.

The marchesa then enquired the situation of the marchese; and one of the female attendants being dispatched to make some enquiries respecting her lord, soon returned with information that he was better.

The remainder of the evening and the night was passed in all the distress and alarm which such an event could not fail of occasioning. None of the inhabitants of the villa retired to repose, and the medical gentlemen continued there till morning. Their chief care, however, was claimed by the Marchese di Rovenza, whose state was such, that all their skill was necessary to preserve him from a frenzy fever. Their exertions were at length rewarded by success, and before evening he sunk into the composed languor which usually terminated the slight attacks of insanity, to which he was subject, when particularly affected by any agitating circumstances. Meanwhile the hapless Cecilia sought relief, under the dreadful shock she received, in religion only; and while struggling to subdue the affliction

of her heart, devoted herself to the task of watching beside the couch of the marchesa, whose feeble frame and sorrow-worn mind, were but ill adapted to encounter such trials as that she had but just experienced.

It was now that Cecilia became convinced of the cruelty and depravity of Ottavania's nature. Not once, during her indisposition, had this unfeeling young woman entered the chamber of her mother, nor did she even attempt to screen the unnatural indifference she felt concerning her amiable parent, by a single enquiry relative to her health.

The unhappy marchesa made no observation on this frightful conduct; but the tenderness with which she treated the young Cecilia, and the more than once repeated wish that she had such a daughter, plainly spoke the concealed anguish of her mind. In the attentive anxiety of Leonardo, however, some alleviation was offered to her griefs; for he incessantly haunted the antichamber and his concern for the situation of his amiable mother, was manifested by the tender and earnest enquiries he made almost hourly respecting her.

On the third day, the marchese was sufficiently well to leave his chamber; and immediately on so doing, visited the apartments of his lady, with whom he had an interview, which lasted some hours: after which, he returned to his room in considerable agitation, and Cecilia was summoned from her own apartment, whither

she had retired on his entering that of his lady, to attend the marchesa.

With her amiable protectress, she found the Signora della Albina: both were in tears, but they did not seem tears of sorrow; and the gentle chearfulness with which the marchesa addressed Cecilia, and desired her to approach nearer to her couch, augured some pleasing communication. An involuntary emotion of awakening expectation and hope played round the saddened heart of the lovely girl, as the marchesa cautiously endeavoured to prepare her for hearing some agreeable intelligence, and, in tremulous accents, she interrupted that lady by articulating, "My mother—is it not that she is found, that my revered protectress means to say?" A transient pensive shade marked the countenance of the marchesa as she replied: "Alas! I cannot—I grieve to confess that it is not in my power to chase away the troubles of my beloved Cecilia with such joyful information; but we may hope to soon gain that desired intelligence; as a young friend, who is very much interested in the cause, is *still living*."

Alternately pale and flushed, the countenance of Cecilia spoke the tumultuous agitation of her bosom, while, in quick, though scarcely audible tones, she pronounced—

"It is *Orazio*—it is *he* who lives!"

"He does," said the marchesa, and her

perturbation did not seem less than that which her young *protegée* experienced.

Eagerly Cecilia now entreated to know whence she had received this unexpected and singular information; and the marchesa prepared to gratify her impatient anxiety. But in order to do so, it was necessary to mention some circumstances with which Cecilia was as yet unacquainted; and she now found that the marchesa was not so ignorant respecting Orazio Angelo, as she had hitherto thought proper to appear to be. After slightly apologising to Cecilia for the late reserve and mystery she had used, the marchesa continued—"The necessity for precaution or evasion no longer exists, and I am at liberty to give you a brief explanation of the events which induced me to adopt such measures. The young man known to you by the name of Orazio Angelo, is really the son of a noble and illustrious house. He is the last descendant of a once princely family; but the misfortunes and ruin of his father have left him no inheritance but virtue—no country but the world; and with innumerable estimable qualities, this youth is doomed to pass his days in comparative indigence, and in obscurity, unless he can establish proofs of his father's innocence, and obtain the revocation of a sentence which, with cruel severity, has punished the supposed crimes of the parent, not only with the loss of life, of fame, and

fortune, but has also deemed his innocent offspring to perpetual banishment from the country of his forefathers. Orazio is this hapless proscribed being. Sheltered from infamy amid the wild and impenetrable recesses of the Alps, he received from an unfortunate recluse, who once loved his parents, that support and education which has made him what he is; and with his patron, protected and secured from want or danger, by the ostentatious pride and pity of the terrific Angelo Guicciardini, has flourished like the cedar in the wilderness, superior to all around him, and yet towering in unnoticed grandeur. Unconscious of his noble birth, or ruined fortunes, this brave and high-spirited youth must have lived and died in the occupation of a hunter, had not providence suddenly furnished his venerable friend with some means of proving that the Count di Udina, his father, was, in fact, innocent of the crimes for which he suffered. In the enthusiasm of friendship and hope, the old man revealed the secret of his birth to the youth, and confided to his care the documents, which, at some future period, might serve to vindicate his murdered father's honour, and obtain for himself his rights. Prudence and steady precaution are seldom among the virtues of youth. Orazio di Udina burned with impatience to commence some measures for the revocation of that dreadful sentence, which had sunk his father's name in infamy. But the

age and infirmities of his friend prevented the latter from being able to take any active steps in the affair; and the young man was too grateful to forsake the friend of his infancy, to expire in solitude. The days of the good recluse, however, soon drew to a close, and the robber Angelo, on the approaching dissolution of the former, claimed the right of protecting and befriending Orazio, and by a solemn vow bound himself to do so; as well as never to demand his entering those lawless bands of which he was captain. The aged friend of Orazio found by experience that Angelo would respect his oath, and died in peace. But before he departed from this earthly scene, he had written to a friend, who, in his earlier years, had possessed his highest esteem and confidence, and revealing to this noble and good man the secret of Orazio's origin, implored his friendship for the young man. Of this letter Orazio knew not at the time; for his guardian had feared to communicate the circumstance to him, lest some disappointment might occur; and as Angelo Guicciardini was entrusted with the management of having the letter conveyed to the nobleman to whom it was addressed, and would of course receive an answer, there seemed no necessity for acquainting Orazio with the affair, till it should be ascertained whether the result of the application was successful or not.

"The recluse died suddenly, ere the an-

swer returned; and Orazio, after a few days devoted to unfeigned sorrow, regret, and respect for the good man who had tenderly cherished him in infancy, and reared him in virtue, prepared to leave his Alpine residence; and fearing that Angelo Guicciandini might wish to retard his departure, the young man clandestinely quitted his secluded abode, but was overtaken on the borders of the Lago Maggiore, by Angelo, and some of his men, who had discovered his flight, and purposely pursued him."

"It was at that time then that he sought shelter in my mother's cottage!" exclaimed the amazed Cecilia.

"It was," replied the marchesa; "but his so doing was previously concerted. Angelo Guicciardini, vexed and angry at his flight, was actuated in his pursuit of the youth by having, a few hours after he had fled, received a most favourable reply from the nobleman, to whom the venerable friend of Orazio had written; and when the robber overtook Orazio in the valley, not far from your residence, he gave him the letter. This unexpected circumstance inspired the young man with hope and joy; for on perusing the contents of the epistle, he not only found that he had a warm and zealous friend in the noble writer, but also that he was journeying to him, and to claim him as the best gift his friend the recluse could have committed to his care.

" In the letter of the recluse, however, he had not exactly described the approach to the wild retreat where he resided; and his noble friend had written to request a proper direction how to proceed, and waited for the answer at Locarno.

" To return to the Alps, and then await the arrival of the Count Lerbonino, for so was this nobleman called, Orazio thought would be unnecessary, and therefore immediately proposed proceeding to Locarno. This Angelo did not approve, but suggested the propriety of his seeking a residence in some one of the cottages near the edge of the lake, and promised that the count should speedily be informed where to find him. The probable difficulty of any stranger gaining admission at such an hour, suggested to the robber Guicciardini the artifice which was so successfully practised upon your mother; and Orazio most reluctantly consented to ask admission and concealment in the cottage, as one who was pursued by ruffians. What followed you already know. Orazio's surprise at the conduct of Guicciardini, in avowing an intention of becoming your *protector*, was I believe as unbounded as your own on that occasion. He, however, felt convinced that Angelo would never have made such an offer, had he not been particularly interested for the Signora di Berlotti and yourself; and that he was conscious that some hidden danger threatened both, and which would render his protec-

tion acceptable and useful. But whatever might be the motives that induced the robber Angelo to make such promises, Orazio is unacquainted with them; for although he requested Angelo to explain them to him, this strange man positively refused to do so.

"But to proceed with my little narrative, which I perceive has much excited your astonishment, I must inform you, that the pilgrim who visited your cottage was the Count Lerbonino, and who had received such proofs of Orazio's being really the son of the unfortunate Count di Udina, that he hesitated not a moment in promising his utmost support and interest to the young man; and it was this excellent nobleman who immediately procured him a commission in the Venetian army, and introduced him into the world as the Signor Locendro, which name he will continue to retain, till a proper opportunity shall occur for him to attempt to erase the opprobrious stain attached to the memory of his father, and likewise the recovery of his birth-rights."

It now remains only for me to explain how I became acquainted with the particulars I have just related, and to account to you, my dear Cecilia, for the reluctance I have hitherto shewn to the marchese being informed that the young Orazio Angelo, the supposed associate of the robber Guicciardini, and the Signora Locendro, were the same person. But to

render these circumstances clear to your comprehension, I must enter into a long detail; and as I am not at present equal to the task, I must entreat your patience till I am in a less exhausted state. It is necessary, however, that you should be now informed that Orazio was not concerned in the escape of Guicciardini, and that my lord the marchese merely hazarded the deviation from truth in saying that he was so, in the intention of ascertaining what effect such a piece of intelligence would produce upon *you*." "Upon me, madam!" ejaculated Cecilia, deeply blushing with the emotions of wounded delicacy; "what could induce his excellenza to use such an unworthy artifice?"

"The information he has received from some *concealed* friend that you are much attached to this young man, whom at that moment he considered only as the arch pupil of Guicciardini," replied the marchesa; and Cecilia became more confused and indignant. An involuntary sensation of pride prevented her making any further remark on the subject; and the expression of the marchesa that her lord had received his information from a *concealed* friend, assured her that enquiries relative to that friend would be unavailing.

The marchesa, perceiving how much her young *protegée* was hurt and offended, forbore, with considerate good-nature, to continue the unpleasing subject, but said, without appearing to have noticed the

emotion of Cecilia, " The escape of Angelo Guicciardini was critical in the extreme. With singular audacity he had ventured to Venice, although he must have been acquainted with the strict search then making for him, and was even traced by the sbirri to the church of San Moses, and from thence to a house on the Rialto. When the officers reached the house, he was, indeed, then in disguise, with a party of his men; but although all possible pains were taken by those indefatigable and vigilant officers to seize him and them, their efforts proved ineffectual. This event caused great uneasiness to the marchese, who had been informed, the moment that he arrived in Venice, of Angelo's being in that city; and his anger and disappointment was increased by the Father Ascollini's (who had waited on him the day prior to Guicciardini's successful flight) assuring him that he had met the young Orazio in the square of St. Mark, and that he was confident the young man was in Venice, merely as the spy and companion of the robber Angelo. The marchese now resolved to have Orazio arrested, but before he had endeavoured to put his design into execution, Guicciardini escaped; and my lord, in his vexation and chagrin, neglected to take any measures for the apprehension of Orazio;—a fortunate negligence, which has saved him from the dreadful circumstance of being the acci-

dental destroyer of a youth, who, he is now informed, is the son of two amiable beings who were dearer to him than life. Judge of the sincerity and excess of Rovenza's friendship, when I declare to you, that the discovery of Orazio's real name occasioned the swoon into which he fell: he sunk under the shock he received on hearing that he had been on the point of ruining one who has claims of the most serious nature on his affection and care. The marchese now awaits his reappearance with the utmost impatience and anxiety; and as every possible enquiry will immediately be made respecting the young man, and as he will doubtless soon return to his regiment, we may expect shortly to see the Signor Locendro at the Villa di Rovenza, where his reception will be equal to my wishes, and his own merits."

"And he was really in Venice!" said Cecilia. "What could have induced him to proceed thither?"

"Doubtless the hope of seeing Angelo, and of learning from him whether he knew what was become of the Signora di Berlotti. Ascollini positively asserts that he saw him there."

"And Father Ascollini!" hesitatingly, said Cecilia,—"Will not he again know the Signor Orazio, should he behold him here, and by mentioning his late connection with Angelo Guicciardini, render him an object of general remark and suspicion?"

" There is no danger of such an event taking place," replied the marchesa.— " The Father Ascollini departs to-day on his return to the Milanese ; but were not that the case, he has received some explanations from the marchese, which would entirely prevent his presuming to offer any further interference in the affair."

Cecilia was now on the point of expressing the anxious wish she experienced to see Orazio, in the hope of possibly receiving from him some information of her mother; but the timid delicacy of her disposition checked the ingenuous effusions of her heart, as she remembered the marchese's motive for asserting the death of Orazio. The marchesa, however, spoke without reserve of her own earnest desire to behold the young man, and cheered the spirits of the lovely girl by assuring her, that she felt an instinctive conviction that he would bring some intelligence respecting the Signora di Berlotti.

" But will the marchesa still so rigorously urge the arrestation of Angelo Guicciardini, madam ?" asked the amiable girl.

" No," replied the marchesa. " In consideration of his extraordinary respect for Orazio, he will no longer pursue Guicciardini with so much earnestness."

The marchesa then repeated her promise of acquainting Cecilia with those particulars that were still unknown to her, on the very first moment that she should find her-

self sufficiently well to do so; and no further very interesting conversation took place that night. The recovery of the marchese, and the amending state of his lady, once more restored something like tranquillity in the villa, and the night was passed in repose and peace.

CHAP. XII.

Cecilia, freed from the voluntary office of attending the couch of the marchesa, by the returning convalescence of that lady, enjoyed a night of calmer repose than she had latterly been accustomed to experience. The pleasing anticipation of soon hearing of her beloved mother had imparted a degree of tranquillity to her spirits, and cheered her mind with the consoling prospect of a speedy termination of her troubles. While thus attentive to the soothing whispers of hope, she dwelt not on the singularities of the marchesa's extraordinary relation, and yielding to the wishes of her heart, fully accredited its truth. To believe Orazio Angelo amiable and deserving, although strikingly unfortunate, was a credulity which she was little inclined to again reject, unless the unequivocal certainty that he was an artful and worthless impostor should render her reviving good opinion of him culpable and dangerous.

To hear the promised remainder of the marchesa's narrative, she was most impatient; and notwithstanding her resolution not to indulge in fruitless surmises, she could not wholly repress the involuntary conjectures which arose in her mind respecting what she had already been informed of, and those circumstances which were still to be related to her. But, although these reflections certainly kept her some time waking, yet the peaceful slumbers that bless the couch of the innocent lulled at length the cares of her bosom in short oblivion, and she arose with the dawn refreshed and composed.

At this early hour none of the inhabitants of the villa, except herself and Lodelli, were yet arisen; and the beauty of the morning induced Cecilia to descend to the gardens, to inhale the calm and scented breeze, that lightly played amid the luxuriant foliage of the dark groves. Her intention of wandering alone for an hour through those delightful shades was, however, disappointed by her meeting with the Father Ascollini, as she was crossing the great hall, towards the portico which opened on the gardens.

Ascollini started on perceiving her. Traces of dissatisfaction and perplexity were legible on his features; but quickly assuming a more placid and cheerful look, he asked wherefore she had quitted her couch so early; and on learning she had intended to walk, he said he would accom-

pany her into the gardens, as he wished to avail himself of the present opportunity of conversing with her alone.

Cecilia would most readily have dispensed with his attendance, for she expected to hear nothing but a recapitulation of his avowed disapprobation of her conduct, and advice for the future, which perhaps her circumstances would not permit her to follow.

Father Ascollini had, even from her earliest days, been an object of Cecilia's reverence, more on account of his sacred profession than from any very amiable qualities in himself. It is true, she wanted that discrimination which experience only can teach, to enable her to form a decided opinion of his character; but there was always evident in his manner, a querulous peevishness and passion, a restless desire of wealth, and an insatiable, prying curiosity, so that it was almost impossible for any human being to feel much interested in his favour. Cecilia, although she revered him as her confessor, her tutor, and the friend of her mother, had never felt for the father any degree of that gentle confidence and affectionate respect with which good and innocent minds regard those whose virtues and situation claim such sentiments; and the fact of her mother's not having confided her real history to him, together with the recent hint which the marchesa had dropt respecting him, were on reflection, circumstances, which did not

now incline the artless girl to think more favourably of the prior.

In her expectation of hearing from the lips of Father Ascollini nought but reproofs and admonitions, Cecilia, however, was disappointed. Wholly devoid of all appearance of austerity or impatience, the looks and manner of the father spoke only grief and serious placidity. He regretted, with apparent feeling and sincerity, his being obliged to leave her still in ignorance of the fate of the Signora di Berlotti, and deeply bewailed the unfortunate and unaccountable reserve of that lady, in her having neglected to acquaint him with her real name and former situation in life. He then cautioned his lovely pupil to avoid, as much as possible, all occasions which might compel her to make inconsiderate promises, and slightly lamented the obligation which prevented her being fully explicit in her relation of the events which had occurred to her from the period of her entering the Rovenza family. Here he paused a moment; but Cecilia's silence assuring him that he had nothing at present to hope from his guarded efforts to induce her to reveal to him the circumstance to which he alluded, he resumed his discourse; and after again expressing a considerable share of uneasiness and anxiety respecting her uncertain situation, he continued—"Not that I imagine your state can be ever made disagreeable in the family, for I well suppose you have too superior a mind to be

affected by the preposterous and foolish pride of the Signora Ottavania di Rovenza, especially as you are so much beloved and caressed by the marchese and marchesa, whose partiality for you is so unbounded, that were they but undeniably assured that your birth is noble, there can be but little doubt of their endeavouring to give you the dearest claims to their regard, by allying you with their son. That Leonardo beholds you with more than common interest, is obvious to every eye; and as he is particularly estimable, you could not long remain insensible to his merits; and thus an establishment might be secured to you, which would, as far as worldly possessions can do so, console you for your disappointment in not being at liberty to embrace that holy profession, which I once fondly hoped you would ornament by your virtues."

The surprise and timidity of Cecilia had alone prevented her from interrupting the father, ere he had concluded his singular speech; but she now mildly assured him, that no consideration could ever induce her to give her hand to Leonardo di Rovenza, even were his parents inclined to sanction so improbable an act, and declared, that if it should prove not the will of providence to restore her to her parent, she should then consider a religious life as the one most pleasing to her mind, and most consonant to her circumstances.

The meekness which had hitherto during

the interview characterized the countenance of Ascollini, now partly disappeared; and his eager eyes seemed to penetrate her soul, as with asperity he demanded whether she disliked Leonardo; and on her timidly replying, that she certainly had not perceived any occasion for dislike in the manners of the Signor di Rovenza, he said, "Then I am confident that you have strangely indulged a prepossession in favour of some other, or you could not have beheld Leonardo di Rovenza with this evident indifference."

Confused and slightly indignant at this strange accusation, and remembering the marchesa's assertion that some secret friend had informed her lord that her young *protegée* cherished but too favourable sentiments for Orazio, Cecilia's lovely and intelligent features were instantly suffused with a deep and conscious glow, that seemed to give a too evident confirmation of the truth of the prior's charge.

Ascollini, who had earnestly observed the artless and striking expression of her countenance, almost immediately exclaimed, "Alas! my dear child you have certainly suffered your heart to receive a prepossession in favour of one, who, although now likely, I understand, to be honoured with the notice of the Marchesa di Rovenza, we must still allow has been the pupil of a robber, and who is still involved in mysterious circumstances — circumstances which, however, I must

confess are still partly unexplained to me, but such as appear to forbid your indulgence of this predilection. Hurt as was Cecilia by this pointed allusion to Orazio, and rather surprised at the prior's having been only partially confided in by the marchese, she had still the courage to reply in such terms as effectually silenced Ascollini, who, pausing to quell his rising emotions of vexation, gazed upon her with a transient look of severe reproof. But again he quickly smoothed his brow with the smile of complacency; and imparting the precipitancy with which he had ventured to express his suspicions, to his anxious fears for her welfare, he declared, that nothing could give him truer satisfaction than the conviction that her heart was free from any impressions which might increase the troubles and difficulties of her circumstances. He then particularly cautioned her to beware of Angelo Guicciardini, and his emissaries, as they would doubtless make a speedy attempt to carry her off from the protection of the Marchese di Rovenza, to whom he advised her to confide, with unreserved sincerity, every future event that might occur to her. Cecilia made no reply to this latter injunction, but enquired whether it was his real opinion, that the robber Angelo had positively any intention of taking her from the villa, on the night she had seen him in the temple. Ascollini answered without hesitation, that such must certainly have been

Guicciardini's design. She next requested to know what was his opinion respecting the apparently supernatural being she had been so much alarmed by in the oratory. Ascollini, solemnly crossing his bosom, replied, that there might exist a probability that the phantom she had beheld was not an imaginary object; but as it was a subject on which nothing decided could be said, he must request her leave to decline continuing it, adding, "But you have nothing to fear from spiritual agents, while you preserve your innocence and integrity."

Ascollini then asked her some unimportant questions relating to the Signor Faenza; and on finding that she knew scarcely any thing of this character, he seriously admonished her to beware of him, as he was a confirmed libertine, who never renounced the accomplishment of any wish or whim which he once indulged. Cecilia assured the father that she could have nothing to dread from one, who was so speedily to become the husband of another. He shook his head, and significantly said, that he believed the intended match would be entirely broken off, as the Marchese di Rovenza had recently heard some accounts of the Signor Faenza, which proved him to be wholly undeserving the honour of an alliance with the Rovenza family. Cecilia heard this intelligence without surprise; for acquainted with Ottavania's passion for Orazio, she could not forbear imputing the attempts to prejudice the mar-

chese against the Signor Faenza, to the cunning machinations of the Signora di Rovenza, and her friend, the artful Bellinzetto; and the lovely girl involuntarily recoiled in digust and abhorrence at the anticipation of what Orazio would probably endure from the unfeminine want of delicacy which, she trembled to think, Ottavania might display in her efforts to obtain his notice and attentions, should he visit at the Villa di Rovenza as the Signor Locendro.

Cecilia, however, did not express these suspicions to the Father Ascollini, to whom she still resolved not to confess her having seen Orazio, although the influence of long habits of early confidence in the former sometimes made her deeply regret the impossibility of trusting him at the present moment, and at suffering him to depart unacquainted with the whole of her situation. Still, however, the recollection of her mother's want of entire confidence in him, and the impressive hints of the marchesa, counterbalanced her inclinations to speak to him without reserve.

While these reflections passed rapidly in her mind, Father Ascollini continued to warn her of the arts of Faenza, whom he represented in the most odious colours, as a designing, selfish, and malignant villain.

Grateful for cautions, which, although she suspected that this character of Faenza was exaggerated, appeared to be well meant, and would certainly enable her to guard

against any plans that the capricious fancy of the signor might urge him to form against herself, Cecilia acknowledged, with unfeigned thankfulness, the considerate warnings of Ascollini.

The father appeared highly gratified by her artless and animated expressions of gratitude, and once more dwelling with earnest solemnity on the necessity there was for her to observe the utmost prudence and caution while in her present circumstances, he informed her, that he was to set off for the Milanese in a few hours, and alluding to the probability that he should not be able to see her again in private, prior to his departure, he bade her farewel in a manner so paternally kind and affectionate, that Cecilia could not refrain from shedding tears at the sad idea that it could be possible he was not wholly entitled to her confidence; and as his hasty and receding footsteps bore him rapidly from her sight, she felt a sense of sorrow steal on her heart, and deprive her of the gleam of comfort, with which hope had lightened her prospects.

CHAP. XIII.

Some time elapsed ere she could express her involuntary grief, and regain sufficient composure to enable her to proceed to the breakfast room in apparent tranquillity.

All the family, she had understood, would be assembled there to congratulate the marchese and marchesa on their recovery and re-appearance; and therefore, had she even indulged a wish of being absent, she could not have avoided joining the party. As she slowly proceeded towards the breakfast room, she was met by Leonardo di Rovenza, whose surprise and pleasure at the unexpected encounter were more apparent in his animated looks than in his words; for while his eyes expressed all the satisfaction of his heart, his language was diffident, and even cautiously polite. Cecilia shrunk from his attentions with an involuntary confusion and uneasiness, which the recollection of the Father Ascollini's mention of this young signor now caused her to experience; and she hastened onward with a degree of speed which Leonardo preceived with the utmost chagrin, as it evinced her inclination to avoid him. In silence, he now attended her to the folding doors of the breakfast-room. On entering, she perceived that not only the marchese, and marchesa, with their usual guests, were present, but that the Contessa di Luzzana, and two other ladies, were in the apartment. With emotions of unfeigned satisfaction did Cecilia behold the former lady, nor were the looks of the contessa less expressive of pleasure at the sight of that amiable girl.

The hour occupied by this morning's repast was the most calm and pleasing

that Cecilia had experienced from the moment when she had discovered that the letter, which she had received as from the pen of her beloved mother, was a forgery.—Hope and expectation still soothed her mind with promised happiness, and she almost forgot the alarms and troubles she had suffered, when she heard the marchese speak to the Contessa di Luzzana respecting the Signor Locendro, who, in reply, described him as the possessor of every virtue, while the marchese, appearing a most attentive and pleased auditor, requested that he might be informed when this amiable young signor should again make his appearance at the Villa di Luzzana.

The contessa, whose animated eyes sparkled with increased lustre, as the marchese expressed his wishes of being introduced to Locendro, promised to send the earliest intelligence of his arrival, should he again visit at her villa. Cecilia, already aware that the contessa was acquainted with some particulars of Orazio's history, was not surprised at the marchese's applying to that lady for the earliest intelligence of the Signor Locendro; but although the marchese was earnest in his enquiries, it was evident that he observed all the caution in making them, which should prevent any person, but those who were well informed of the private interest which he felt for the young man, from perceiving any particularity in his manner.

While the marchese and the contessa

conversed on this subject, Cecilia accidentally glanced her eyes on Ottavania, whose emotion was now too obvious to escape general notice; and as surprise was fully visible amid the flush of joy which overspread her features, Cecilia could not but imagine her still a stranger to the just and benevolent motives which actuated the marchese in his eager desire to behold and receive the pretended Signor Locendro.

The truth of this surmise she could not, however, ascertain at that moment, but her conjecture was soon afterwards verified in a private interview with the marchese, who, before she retired after breakfast, requested to see her in the library. The conversation that took place in this interview chiefly related to Orazio. The marchese made numerous enquiries respecting Cecilia's former knowledge of this young man, and seemed perfectly satisfied and pleased with her timid, yet accurate description of the manners and accomplishments he had displayed, while received at the cottage of the Signora di Berlotti. He then spoke with apparently grateful pleasure of the discovery which had so fortunately occurred relative to the claims which Orazio possessed to his friendship and support; professed the most generous and liberal intentions in favour of the noble youth, as he termed him;—regretted the untoward fate that had doomed him to pass his earliest years under the protection of the robber Angelo Guicciardini; and concluded

with solemnly enjoining Cecilia never to divulge to any human being any of the circumstances which she was acquainted with relative to Orazio's real rank and former situation.

The amiable and artless girl required no persuasions to induce her to promise an observance of silence on that subject, and having assured the marchese that she would strictly obey his wishes in this respect, she requested to know whether he still believed Angelo Guicciardini to be an agent of the Count de Weilburgh. Di Rovenza, however, declared that he could not decidedly reply to her question: but recommended her to await the re-appearance of Orazio, who, from his connexion with that singular and formidable man, could probably give her some certain information relative to her parent.—The marchese then promised to continue his endeavours to discover the Signora di Berlotti, and earnestly assured Cecilia that be the event of his efforts fortunate or otherwise, she herself should ever find that protection and kindness beneath his roof, which her virtues and unnumbered amiable qualities so well entitled her to claim. Fain would the lovely girl have replied in the most heartfelt and animated terms which gratitude could dictate, but the unaffected urbanity of the marchese's present manner, and the commiserating pity of his looks, affected her so much, that she was unable to express her grátitude but by the silent and impres-

sive tears that fell from her upraised eyes, as her innocent and intelligent glance rested on the countenance of the marchese, who witnessed not her tears without appearing to be much agitated. With increased gentleness, he endeavoured to console her with the chearing hope of speedily learning some particulars relating to her mother, and at length, as if urgent to withdraw her thoughts from the suspense and sorrow which she suffered, he enquired, whether the marchesa had, as yet, fully informed her of Orazio's history.

Cecilia replied in the negative, and he then recommended to her to hear the further particulars as early as convenient, as she would then be perfectly informed why he felt so lively an interest respecting the young man.

The hesitation, which usually marked the marchese's manner of speaking was so much increased as he gave her this advice, and his countenance assumed so ghastly a paleness, that Cecilia, involuntarily alarmed by the striking emotion he displayed, hastily arose, and earnestly enquiring whether he was indisposed, would have left the apartment to send assistance to him.

Rovenza did not seem to possess power to forbid her doing so, but he grasped her hand, and, with convulsive force, detained her, and, struggling with his feelings, at length articulated, "I am not ill.—The pangs I endure are those of memory, and ——." Again he paused—an agonizing

sigh seemed to rend his heart, ere he had strength to add, "When you shall learn the history of the Udina family, you will then be able to account for the emotion which you perceive I now endure.—Yes, you will then confess that the miserable fate of those I loved and valued even more than my existence, forms a sufficient cause for my eternal regrets and my unceasing misery."

The looks of the marchese now became more wild, gloomy, and desponding. Cecilia once more attempted to withdraw, and he made no further effort to oppose her leaving the room: but requesting that Fabricio should be immediately ordered to attend him, permitted her to depart.

CHAP. XIV.

Cecilia's first care was to direct that the marchese's valet should instantly attend the commands of his lord in the library; and she then hastened to the apartments of the marchesa, whom she informed of all that had been said during her conversation with the marchese, and gently intimated how much he had been agitated by his reference to the history of the Udina family.

"Alas," sighed the marchesa, while the tears, that now stole down her own cheeks, evinced that she was almost equally affected as her lord by the mention of that

regretted family; "alas, my dear Cecilia, this is, indeed, a subject which cannot fail to awaken the keenest sensibilities of the soul. It is a story replete with sorrow and dreadful incidents. My memory, too faithful for my peace, records, with frightful accuracy, the mysterious tale—and yet my trembling lips involuntarily close when I would commence the sad task of detailing events which have so long been the source of the most agonizing affliction to my heart. Rovenza mourns unceasingly the ruin of those so well beloved by him, but my tears flow often in the still midnight hour, for in Veronica di Udina I weep a sister!"

"A sister!" tremulously exclaimed Cecilia; "and called Veronica?" she added, in a tone of anxious enquiry.

The marchesa examined her look a moment in silent surprise, and then demanded wherefore she so earnestly asked that question.

"Because," replied Cecilia, "the casket of jewels given me by the pilgrim, whom you have informed me was really the Count Lerbonino, was recognized by my mother as having once belonged to a lady named Veronica."

"Describe those jewels, I implore you, Cecilia," cried the marchesa, with wild eagerness.

Cecilia instantly obeyed, and the marchesa, almost gasping, articulated, "they were, indeed, my poor Veronica's.—But

how came they into the possession of the Count?"

"Alas, I know not;" replied Cecilia, "but, surely, this circumstance evinces that my beloved mother was the friend of the Countess di Udina."

The marchesa turned away her eyes from the face of Cecilia; embarrassment and uneasiness were now mingled with the grief-fraught expression of her features, and she returned no answer to the observation her young *protegée* had just made, till the latter timidly repeating her remark, compelled her to say,

"They were probably acquainted—my sister was universally beloved, and courted equally by strangers and the natives of her own country."

"Then your excellenza still believes my mother was not a native of Italy?"

"You have given me no reason to suppose her so," hastily replied the marchesa, and Cecilia drew back, abashed and surprised at the impatience and perplexity which the looks and manners of her protectress then displayed.

A few moments of mutual silence and uneasiness followed. The countenance of the marchesa at length resumed its usual expression of pensive sadness; and, in a tone of more than common gentleness, she said, while affectionately pressing the hand of Cecilia, "My dear child, be not thus grieved by the ill-timed asperity of my manner.—Alas! hereafter you may be in-

clined to allow that cares like mine might excuse even greater foibles and inadvertences."

Cecilia, infinitely more affected by the concession than she had been by the offence, instantly declared the fault was all her own in having hazarded an enquiry on a painful subject, to which no decided answer could be given.

The marchesa checked her artless self-reproaches, and once more referred to the jewels, expressing the utmost regret at the casket's having been stolen from the apartment of Cecilia; and declared that she could not believe it had been taken away by Angelo Guicciardini.

This was a point on which Cecilia could make no reply, for she knew not whom else to suspect or accuse; and she shrunk from the idea of asking the marchesa any further questions for the present, lest she should again offend. The marchesa, however, appeared to fully comprehend her anxiety, and, after a slight pause, added, "You think my assertion of Angelo not having been the purloiner of the casket singular; but as I am not quite certain of the fidelity of all my household, I think I am justified in my surmises, and shall of course immediately pursue some method to ascertain whether I am right in my suspicions. But of this we will talk no further. I shall now endeavour, if possible, to relate to you some particulars relative to the lamented and unfortunate

parents of the youth for whom both the marchese and myself are so much interested." The emotion of the marchesa was now so excessive, that Cecilia, dreading the effect which the attempted relation might produce on the health and spirits of her respected friend, so earnestly entreated the narrative might be deferred till a more favourable opportunity, that the marchesa, at length confessing herself unequal to the task of giving a full detail of the Udina family, informed her young *protegée* that she would depute her friend, the Signora della Albina, to relate to her the leading particulars of the history of that unfortunate house.

Cecilia received this intimation with undissembled satisfaction, as she not only felt gratified by being spared the unhappiness of witnessing the agitation and pain which her protectress would experience in the recital, but she was also conscious that she could listen with much more composure and attention to the signora than she could have done to the marchesa.

Scarcely had the lovely girl thanked the marchesa for this change, when the Signora della Albina entered the apartment; and on being requested to relieve her friend from the painful necessity of being the relater of the misfortunes of the house of Udina, readily acquiesced; but the melancholy gloom which almost instantly overspread her features, gave to Cecilia a farther preparation for the sad import of

the tale she earnestly desired, yet feared to hear.

After some little consideration between the marchesa and the signora, it was decided that the latter should accompany Cecilia to her apartments, when she should retire for the night, and there give the promised recital, as no interruption could at that hour be apprehended. The marchesa then informed Cecilia that the signora would also be at liberty to acquaint her with those circumstances that related to her recent discovery of Orazio's real name and situation, and the motives which had hitherto prevented her from being perfectly unreserved with the marchese on the subject.

Cecilia now once more expressed her acknowledgments, and soon after withdrew, to seek the Contessa di Luzzana, who the signora informed her had been enquiring for her.

The contessa, with the friends who had accompanied her to the villa, and attended by the Count Carraci and Leonardo, Cecilia found seated in one of the shaded porticos that opened into the gardens.—The moment the contessa perceived her advancing, she arose, and apologizing to her friends, hastened to meet Cecilia, and taking her arm, led her a little apart, while with impatient earnestness she whispered, "I rejoice in your presence, my amiable young friend.—I dreaded that I should not have been able to find an op-

portunity of speaking to you alone this day, and I have been almost distracted by my anxiety to communicate to you a circumstance; with which it is important you should be made acquainted.

"The Signor Locendro will arrive at my villa this evening. He has written to inform me so, and to implore an interview with you prior to his visiting here. In extenuation of this request, he pleads that he is the bearer of some intelligence which can only be communicated to yourself."

Cecilia, overwhelmed with the mingled emotions of surprise, joy, doubt and fear, found herself unable to reply immediately, or to make a single observation on this extraordinary request; a request not less singular for Orazio to make, than for the Contessa di Luzzana to sanction. At length the amazed and agitated girl timidly demanded where the Signor Locendro wished to converse with her.

"At my house, if I can obtain the consent of your friends to your passing the night there," replied the contessa, and with some embarrassment she added—"I am conscious you do not behold me with very favourable sentiments, while I am thus apparently countenancing mystery and evasion: but this is not a moment when I can explain my motives. At present I must be content with the approbation of my own conscience, and while I assure Cecilia di Berlotti that I am actu-

ated only by the most pure and generous intentions in my present seemingly strange conduct, I entreat to know whether she will entrust herself to my protection, should the marchese permit her accompanying me to my villa."

"Is the Signor Locendro then still ignorant of the Marchese di Rovenza's good designs in his favour, that he thus seeks to see me so clandestinely, madam?" said Cecilia.

The contessa looked more perplexed and uneasy than she had ever done before, and, in a tone of evident anxiety and vexation, answered,

"The Signor Locendro is informed of the Marchese di Rovenza's intentions to serve and protect him; he means, no doubt, also to instantly claim his offered friendship. But there exists, I believe, a motive, which I cannot reveal, for his soliciting this private interview, the propriety of granting which I think you ought not to doubt, when I have undertaken to request it, and to permit it to take place beneath my own roof.

"But I will be perfectly ingenuous with you, Signorâ Cecilia," coldly added the contessa, "and inform you that should you agree to accompany me home, neither the marchese nor his lady must be made acquainted with the occasion of your visit."

Cecilia, now inexpressibly surprised, knew not how to reply. To positively re-

fuse this singular invitation she could not resolve. She did not doubt the urgency of the contessa's motives for this deviation from propriety; yet she scarcely dared to venture on a step by which she might forfeit the good opinion of her respected protectress. At length the idea that Orazio wished to give her some information respecting her mother,—information possibly of a nature which might require the utmost secrecy, surmounted all her scruples; and, influenced by the peculiarity of her situation, she no longer withheld her assent to accompany the Contessa di Luzzana to the villa, provided her friends should acquiesce.

CHAP. XV.

The moment that the Contessa di Luzzana had obtained Cecilia's consent to accompany her on her return to the Villa di Luzzana, she proceeded to solicit the approbation of the Marchese and Marchesa di Rovenza to the little excursion of their *protegée*.

Cecilia meanwhile retired to her apartment, in a state of mind more perplexed and agitated than she had ever before experienced. Her recent interviews with the marchese and marchesa had occasioned her considerable emotion, and her conversation with the Contessa di Luzzana had served

only to heighten her anxiety and surprise. The request of Orazio to see her clandestinely excited the most strange conjectures that wonder, not unmixed with fear, could suggest to her imagination. That Orazio should be acquainted with the benevolent intentions of the marchese and marchesa in his favour, and even mean to accept their protection and friendship, and yet deem it necessary to solicit a private and secret interview with herself, prior to his presenting himself at the villa, was a circumstance as mysteriously incomprehensible to Cecilia, as were most of the events which had lately marked her life. If he had any communication to make respecting the situation of her mother, wherefore should he, even for a moment, hesitate to inform the friends whose favour and protecting kindness she so liberally experienced of a fact which would doubtless rejoice them. Could Orazio indeed know that he was related to the Rovenza family, and yet act with so much reserve. The marchesa had but just declared, that the Contessa di Udina was her sister. How dear and valued was the memory of that lamented sister the grief and unceasing regrets of the former evinced, nor did the marchese appear to feel less forcibly the keenest sorrow for the fate of the Udina family. No, certainly, Orazio must be unacquainted with the claims which the marchese and marchesa have on his confidence and unreserve, mentally replied Ce-

cilia; and in this idea she was confirmed by the circumstance of his not having visited at the Villa di Rovenza at an earlier period than that which was approaching. Every moment which she gave to reflection now served only to increase her anxiety to hear the history of the Udina family. That her mother had once been intimately acquainted with the Contessa Veronica di Udina Cecilia no longer doubted; and this circumstance seemed to account for the avidity with which the Signora di Berlotti had received the young Orazio into her friendship and residence. But why the protection of the Rovenza family had not been sought for this young man seemed equally singular and inexplicable. Most ardently would Cecilia have regretted that her accompanying the Contessa di Luzzana to her villa, must, of course, deprive her of the opportunity of hearing the sad tale of the misfortunes of the house of Udina, had not her expectant hope of receiving some intelligence of her dear parent from Orazio reconciled her to the unavoidable disappointment; and perhaps a secret satisfaction, of which she was not entirely conscious, of beholding him whom she had been led to consider only as the outcast companion of a banditti horde, now as the relative of a noble house, and boasting birth and virtue, mingled with the cheering anticipation that he was the bearer of some information of the Signora di Berlotti, at

length enabled Cecilia to resolve on continuing to await with patience the full elucidation of those mysteries, which no reflection or conjecture could assist her in developing. Still, however, she felt the liveliest uneasiness at the idea of concealing, from the marchesa at least, the occasion of her intended visit to the Villa di Luzzana; but her anxiety respecting her mother, and the consciousness that the Contessa, whose character was so truly estimable, would never have approved, nor sanctioned a clandestine interview, unless actuated by the most urgent and important motives, in some degree served to excuse her conduct to herself, and although she truly lamented the necessity for apparent dissimulation, she felt herself irresistibly impelled to determine to observe the silence which the Contessa di Luzzana had assured her would be so essentially proper in the present instance.

A message to attend the marchese at length interrupted her reflections; and she immediately proceeded to the apartment where he usually sat.

The first person Cecilia beheld on entering the room was the Contessa di Luzzana, and the serious and chagrined look of that lady seemed to imply that she had suffered some disappointment in her application to the marchese, who was walking up and down the apartment in much apparent emotion.

As Cecilia entered, he hastily turned,

and with a frown, such as she could scarcely have imagined would have ever been directed to herself, said,—"I have sent for you, young lady, to desire that you will immediately make your apologies to the Contessa di Luzzana for having ventured to promise to accompany her on her return home, without having first obtained the permission of your present protectors, who are certainly best entitled to be the guides and guardians of your actions, as the duty they have voluntarily taken upon themselves renders them in some degree accountable for your conduct.—For the future I must request you will recollect this circumstance, and deport yourself accordingly, Cecilia."

There was a steady, authoritative asperity in the manner of the marchese which equally confounded and surprised her to whom this speech was addressed, and feeling convinced that she had, indeed, acted improperly, she submitted in silence to the reproof.

The marchese, rather pacified by this tacit acknowledgment of error, perceiving that Cecilia could not instantly become sufficiently collected to offer her excuses to the contessa, who sat no very pleased spectatress of the scene, again spoke, and, in a gentler tone than he had before used, informed his young charge that he had with infinite regret been compelled to decline giving his assent to her proceeding that evening to the Villa di Luzzana; and then repeated his intimation that she ought

not to consider herself as at liberty to make any engagements without his permission while she should continue under his protection.

Cecilia, now rather recovered from the effects of her first surprise, apologized with graceful timidity to the contessa; and then with a degree of modest firmness, which evidently surprised and displeased the Marchese di Rovenza, she demanded whether his not permitting her to accept the invitation of the contessa proceeded from her own inadvertent omission of requiring his approbation of her so doing, or from any other cause.

The glance with which the marchese now observed her fully betrayed the ill-suppressed anger he felt. "From no other cause than that of my fixed resolve never to suffer one so mysteriously circumstanced as yourself to be a moment from beneath my own eye, have I been induced to declare that you are not at present at liberty to accept of any invitations whatever; and the Contessa di Luzzana will do me the justice to believe I must have the most serious and important reason for my not suffering you to avail yourself of the honour she has conferred upon you by *her* invitation."

Cecilia was effectually silenced by this reproving declaration; and with a look which spoke all the uneasiness and disappointment she experienced, she curtseyed to the contessa, and withdrew.

CHAP. XVI.

Yet although Cecilia returned to her chamber agitated and distressed by the disappointment she had received, she could not entirely condemn the conduct of the marchese in refusing his permission to her visiting at the Villa di Luzzana, as it certainly evinced all the prudent care and caution which the singularity of her situation undoubtedly required to be observed.—A faint gleam of hope that Orazio would most probably contrive some other method of giving her the information that he wished to impart, also contributed to render her in some measure resigned to the determination which the marchese had avowed, and the certainty that the supposed Signor Locendro would speedily present himself at the Villa di Rovenza, assured her that she should not long endure the torments of suspensive anxiety, as to the nature of the intelligence he had to communicate to herself, and which, she reasonally supposed, could relate only to the signora her mother.

Cecilia continued to chear her spirits by listening to the suggestions of hope, till the arrival of the dinner hour obliged her to join the family.

The Contessa di Luzzana, and her two female friends, had quitted the villa; but nothing was said that could lead to a

supposition of that lady's having departed in avowed displeasure. The marchese seemed to have forgotten the little misunderstanding that had taken place in the morning, and addressed Cecilia with even more than usual complacence. A peculiar gravity, however, marked the countenances of the marchesa and Signora della Albina, while the spirits of the Signora Ottavania and the Bellinzettos appeared to be elevated to excess; and they seemed inclined to torment Leonardo, who looked the very image of dispondence, by an unceasing strain of gay irony, till the marchese, introducing the subject of the expected arrival of the Signor Locendro, silenced them into attention.

The marchese spoke with apparent freedom respecting Orazio, but from the tenor of his conversation, it was fully evident to Cecilia, that neither the Signor Rovenza, Ottavania, nor her friends, were informed of his full claims of friendship and support with which the marchese declared he intended to distinguish the young stranger.

Attributing this circumstance to the cautious reserve which she had observed usually characterised the conduct of the elder Rovenza, Cecilia was not surprised at it. She knew that the awful predicament in which Orazio stood, in venturing into the Venetian states, rendered the utmost vigilance and care necessary to guard his real name and rank from discovery till such time as he should be fully prepared to

reveal himself as the vindicator of his father's ruined honour.

While the marchese continued to make Orazio the subject of conversation, Leonardo appeared to listen with attentive satisfaction, and with a generous delicacy, which secretly charmed Cecilia, endeavoured to strengthen his father's resolves of serving the young stranger, by declaring that he believed the Signor Locendro entirely worthy of every exertion that could be made to forward his fortunes.

Ottavania, with much more fervour than became her sex, avowed a similar opinion, and was rewarded by a smile from the marchese, who now exclaimed——"Yes, the fortunes of this youth shall henceforth be my most peculiar care.—He is the orphan son of a brave and deserving man, once the dearest of my friends, and my regard for the father shall soon be manifested in my conduct to the son."

"And who was that friend, my dearest father?" asked Ottavania in her softest tone, while eager curiosity sparkled in her eyes.

The marchese, however, declined giving any present account of Orazio, and thus Cecilia became confirmed in the idea that the utmost secrecy respecting him would be observed for some time.

No further conversation of any consequence took place, and Cecilia availed herself of the opportunity of retiring to take

the siesto, with an alacrity usual to her, and to which she was induced by her wish of avoiding the Marchesa di Rovenza, in whose presence the amiable girl now for the first time experienced all the painful consciousness which ever oppresses an ingenuous mind compelled to adopt a silent reserve towards those whom it considers as most worthy of unrestrained confidence. But while the gentle candour of Cecilia's disposition caused her to regret sincerely the necessity of present reserve with her protectress, she could not resolve to disregard the injunctions of the Contessa di Luzzana, or hazard the probability of depriving Orazio of an opportunity of privately informing her of what he seemed to think was so important for herself alone to hear.

Once more at liberty to indulge reflection in the solitary silence of her apartment, the thoughts of Cecilia would soon have wandered amidst the wild mazes of conjectural incertitude, had they not been restrained by her perseverance in her religious duties, from the exercise of which she still derived all the consolation and support which unfeigned piety imparts to the heart of innocence.

Fearful of encountering any occasion of entering into particular conversation with the Marchesa di Rovenza, Cecilia confined herself to her own apartment for the remainder of the evening, and looked

forward to the promised visit of the Signora della Albina with the most earnest yet trembling expectation.

This was the first evening she had ever ventured to remain alone in her chamber, since the night when she had been so much alarmed in the oratory; and as the twilight dispersed into the shade of night, she felt a thrilling awe steal over her mind, and render her susceptible of the most mournful and terrifying impressions of the imagination. The chearfulness of her light and elegant apartments could not erase from her fancy the remembrance of the figure she had seen in the oratory, and as her fearful glance rested on the door that opened into that religious recess, she almost expected to see it suddenly unclose, and the dreaded phantom rush on her view; yet although thus intimidated by superstitious apprehension, Cecilia could not withdraw her gaze, but with all the involuntary perverseness which fear occasions, continually directed her eyes towards the oratory door, till the appearance of Lodelli with lights withdrew her attention and dispelled her terrors. One glance at Lodelli, however, excited alarms of another nature —she was pale and breathless.——

"Oh, signora mio! what do you think has happened?" was her first exclamation on setting down the lights.

Cecilia looked at her with an expression of surprise and enquiry, and Lodelli

needed no further encouragement to proceed.

"Why, the Signor Faenza has been here these two hours, and my lord marchese and he have been quarrelling in the great saloon till they were just about to fight, when in runs the Signor Leonardo, and insisted that he would fight the Signor Faenza himself, instead of letting his excellenza do so.—And what does that spiteful signor do, but, while the Signor Rovenza was drawing his sword in a great hurry, whip behind him and stab him in the back with a long stiletto, and then jumped out of the window into the collonade, and made off before the marchese could recover from his fright at seeing the Signor Leonardo drop down all covered with blood!" Lodelli ceased to speak, but Cecilia was so shocked and amazed, that she was utterly incapable of enquiring whether the assassin had been pursued and taken. The loquacity of her attendant, however, did not leave her long in suspense, for after a short pause, she informed her that the instant the marchese regained the power of speech, of which his terror had deprived him for a few moments, he loudly summoned assistance, and the most eager pursuit was commenced after Faenza, while the unfortunate Leonardo was conveyed bleeding and nearly lifeless to his chamber.

Scarcely had Lodelli concluded this information when a message from the mar-

chese requiring Cecilia's presence in the saloon obliged the latter to attend him.

Pallid, ghastly, and in so much emotion that it was nearly impossible to distinguish the incoherent words that he attempted to articulate, the marchese essayed to relate to Cecilia the particulars of the recent melancholy event. With considerable difficulty she at length comprehended that Faenza had presented himself again at the villa, to demand the cause of a formal reversal which the marchese had sent him of the consent of his union with Ottavania; and that the marchese not chusing to explain his reasons, had irritated him by a refusal to do so; that at length Faenza had thought proper to appear pacified with a promise of future explanation; and acquiescing in the marchese's resolve not to give him the hand of his daughter, had precipitately demanded Cecilia in marriage, at the same time declaring that the mystery of her situation would form no bar to the alliance, as he believed her possessed of virtues which were more than equivalent to the most exalted rank.

"This absurd proposal I instantly rejected," continued the still violently agitated marchese, "as I certainly possess no right to dispose of you in such a manner, my dear child, and at that moment my poor Leonardo entered the room; but Faenza, unchecked by his entrance, proceeded to rave in the most ridiculous and outrageous manner, and insisted that *I* should immediately give

him satisfaction for the double insult I had offered him; and on my involuntarily retreating a step, Leonardo calmly declared that *he* would be the signor's antagonist; and while my son was preparing to chastise the insolent bravado conduct of this wretch, he snatched a poignard from his own breast, and swearing that he should never possess *you*, plunged it into his shoulder, and fled, while I, thunderstruck and motionless, beheld my son fall at my feet, apparently dead."

The miserable marchese then vented the agony of his mind in the bitterest lamentations, and Cecilia sat overwhelmed with horror and astonishment at finding that she herself had been the plea for this detestable outrage on the part of Faenza. Before she had power to conquer her first emotions of consternation, several servants rushed in, exclaiming, "He is taken—the assassin is taken, excellenza!" and instantly drawing back, made way for a tall and elegant majestic figure, whose high plume gracefully waving over his open brow, shaded a countenance, in which Cecilia instantly recognised that of Orazio. Rovenza, apparently overcome by the surprise which the sudden information of Faenza's seizure, and the unexpected appearance of the stranger occasioned, sunk motionless on his seat, while a ghastly and inanimate stare fixed his features in the frightful expression of apathetic derangement of intellect.

Orazio paused at the entrance. He had distinguished the lovely form of Cecilia, and his agitation on beholding her scarcely allowed him to observe the marchese. Instantly displacing his high plumed cap, he now advanced towards her, when Rovenza, starting up, rushed forward, and wildly seizing his arm, arrested his steps, exclaiming,—" Do you know that it was *murder*!—and what punishment is more adequate than——" The voice of the marchese now failed, but he still held the arm of Orazio in a convulsive grasp, and gazed on his features with intense earnestness. Cecilia, involuntarily rising in affright, timidly approached Orazio, and, in whispering accents, articulated: " The marchese is unhappily subject to these slight derangements."

" It is false," cried Rovenza aloud,—"I am not deranged.—Is not this the son of the Count di Udina, and am not I his friend —the friend in whom he trusted with unsuspicious faith?—Do you suppose I do not *remember?*"

The marchese now released the arm of Orazio; and with disordered steps, walked toward the furthest extremity of the room, while the compassionate glance of the youth's beaming eyes followed his agitated form with a look of mingled pity and concern.

Rovenza threw himself distractedly on one of the sofas, and, with a deep groan, sunk into temporary supineness. Orazio,

with a sigh, turned his dark eyes again on Cecilia The important meaning of his look revealed how much he wished to speak, more than the presence of the domestics, (who were nowgathering around the couch on which the marchese reclined) would permit him to utter, and after a moment's hesitation, he said—

" In my way hither, signora, I was so fortunate as to meet the servants sent in pursuit of the Signor Faenza, and learning from them how base and unmanly an attack had been made on the Signor di Rovenza, I joined the party, and aided their pursuits. —We soon had the success to discover the assassin lurking at a short distance from the villa.

" I regret that the present perturbed state of the Marchese di Rovenza forbids me the satisfaction of assuring him that the vile Faenza is now secured." Orazio had scarcely concluded this address, when one of the servants approached, and informing him that his lord was now perfectly sensible, requested he would draw nearer to the couch on which the marchese was reclined.

Bowing to Cecilia, Orazio, with a lingering glance fixed on her beautiful form, preceded the domestic to the sofa, and the amiable girl slowly withdrew from the apartment.

CHAP. XVII.

The moment the marchese perceived Orazio advancing, he waved his hand to dismiss the domestic, and feebly pointed to a chair near the sofa; but the youth, more intently observing the lovely and receding figure of Cecilia as she quitted the room, perceived not the action of Rovenza, till the sound of his sepulchral voice claimed his full attention.

"It is the Signor Locendro that I now address, I believe?" hollowly murmured the marchese.

"I am known by that name, Marchese di Rovenza," replied Orazio, his eyes now rivetted in wonder and compassion on the gaunt, meagre form and pallid ghastly features of the marchese, who shrinking from his gaze, in low and faultering tones, ejaculated—"In mercy, withdraw your piercing eyes from so deep an investigation of my care-marked, miserable features. Your look, so much resembling your ruined and regretted father, entirely convulses my inmost soul!—I cannot endure it."

Orazio, apparently agitated to the greatest excess by this strange address, turned away from before the couch, and placed himself beside a window, where he was sufficiently concealed from the full view of

the marchese; but was still near enough to be able to converse.

"You are informed of every particular of your father's history I presume, young signor," feebly uttered the marchese, after a short pause.

"Not entirely I fear, my lord," was the reply.

"Strange!" ejaculated Rovenza, in an inward tone.—A longer pause ensued.

Orazio did not interrupt the silence; at length the marchese said, "I am indebted to you, Signor Orazio, for the apprehension of the villainous assassin who this night assailed the life of my son. Accept my heartfelt gratitude for this service; I cannot speak all I feel. My actions must give evidence of that sincerity with which I now transfer to you those sentiments of friendship which I so truly bore your brave, lamented father; but my feelings are at present too much affected to permit me to speak on this so interesting subject. I grieve that my son's recent misfortune throws such a melancholy gloom over your reception; yet if I cannot promise you a *smiling* welcome from the marchesa, you will surely pardon the tears that mingle with the pleasure of beholding you, when you consider her present grief on her son's account, and that fond maternal feelings oft forbid controul."

Animated and sympathetic was the reply of the youth. Fain would he have declined intruding on the sorrows of the

marchesa, but the marchese insisted on his being immediately introduced to his lady, and Orazio was compelled to silent acquiescence in this determination.

Rovenza, who some moments before had quitted his recumbent posture on the couch, now feebly rose, and while his eyes were still averted from the youth, tremulously said, "Give me your support, my young friend, and assist my feeble steps to the saloon of the marchesa."

Orazio, with an air of attentive reverence, now supported the trembling frame of the marchese towards the apartment, where the latter expected to find his lady.

As they slowly proceeded across the spacious hall to the opposite side of the edifice, the marchese cautioned Orazio to be extremely circumspect relative to his real name and rank, at the same time informing the young man, that except to the marchesa and himself, the secret was known only to the Signora della Albina and Cecilia di Berlotti.

"And has the young Signora di Berlotti received the information of who I really am from your lips, my lord?" eagerly demanded Orazio.

"Neither the marchesa nor myself have concealed this affair from her," replied Rovenza; and raising his hitherto downcast eyes to the intelligent countenance of the youth, he perceived his features flushed and animated with an expression of exulting pleasure.

This look displeased the marchese, and he was almost inclined to relinquish the assisting support he received from the young man. A moment's reflection, however, determined him to act otherwise, and without appearing to have noticed the look which he secretly disapproved, he said—

"I shall merely introduce you to the marchesa and her friends. You must then have the consideration to dispense with my presence, as the situation of my son renders me impatient to proceed to his chamber."

Orazio, who had hitherto refrained from requesting permission to see Leonardo, from an apprehension that he might be considered as importunately intruding, now diffidently begged to be allowed to attend the marchese to the apartment of his son. Rovenza immediately rejected the young man's offered attendance, adding, that on the morrow he should certainly be introduced to Leonardo, provided the latter should be sufficiently convalescent to admit any stranger. The marchese then informing Orazio that it was probable he should not see him after his introduction to the marchesa till the following day, and that apartments were already prepared for him in the villa, requested him to be in the library at an early hour in the morning.

Orazio bowed assent; for they had just reached the door of the marchesa's saloon, and there was no opportunity for reply.

The marchesa, the Signora della Albina, Ottavania, Cecilia, and the Signoras Bellinzettos, were all in the apartment, and so attentively listening to the Count Carraci, whom they surrounded in a group, and who was informing them that the surgeons and physicians, at that moment attending Leonardo, had pronounced his wound as by no means dangerous, that they perceived not the entrance of the marchese and his elegant young companion, till the former pronouncing the name of Locendro drew every eye towards himself and Orazio.

A brief introduction now took place, the varied feelings of each person present preventing either composure or compliments; and the marchese almost immediately after withdrew to the apartment of his son, accompanied by the Count Carraci.

The ladies, already informed by Cecilia that the Signor Locendro had accidentally effected the seizure of Faenza, were anxious to obtain a circumstantial account of the affair, which Orazio immediately attempted to give; yet the intelligent, and earnestly observing glance with which he frequently encountered the tearful eyes of the marchesa fixed on himself, evinced that he was much more attentive to the suppressed emotion her looks expressed, than to the particulars of the fact he was relating.

Orazio spoke with modesty and brevity, yet when he had concluded his little re-

lation of the circumstance, Ottavania and her friends, unmindful of that delicate reserve which is such an ornament to female manners, uttered so many encomiums on his address in discovering Faenza's lurking place, that Orazio involuntarily coloured with evident surprise and confusion at the want of feminine propriety which the language of Ottavania, in particular, betrayed. In the heartfelt, yet scarcely audible thanks of the marchesa, and the timid, but approving glance of Cecilia, he however found sufficient to reconcile him to the endurance of Ottavania's uncommon audacity and folly; yet he could not avoid occasionally contemplating her with looks of ill-disguised astonishment, as her levity, bold freedom, and evidently excessive vanity, were such as he never had supposed could exist in any female of rank and reputation. These involuntary glances of silent wonder, with which Orazio frequently regarded Ottavania, were received by her as certain indications of admiration; and she soon confirmed the sentiments of disgust with which she inspired him, by an increasing fluency of language, insolent superiority of air, and the total unconcern that she manifested for the unfortunate situation of her brother, and the distress of her family.

While the Signora di Rovenza, to the confusion of the marchesa her mother, continued to make such an ill-timed display of her singular effrontery and folly,

the amiable Cecilia sat overwhelmed by modest shame, and scarcely durst raise her eyes, lest they should behold *her* whom she now indeed considered as one of the most degraded of her sex.

The return of the Count Carraci with the consolatory information that Leonardo was still in no positive danger, and that the marchese had retired to his own apartments for the night, at length gave a pleasing interruption to Ottavania's ill-chosen efforts to attract the admiration of Orazio; and ere she had an opportunity of resuming the same imprudent methods, a message from the marchese her father, desiring her immediate presence in the anti-room of his apartments, obliged her to withdraw, which she did with so much apparent reluctance and vexation, that she became, if possible, even more disgusting in the eyes of him, whom she wished to believe her all that was amiable, and who seemed mentally to rejoice in her absence, as it gave him an opportunity of conversing for a few minutes unreservedly with the marchesa and Cecilia, while the Signora della Albina and the Count Carraci engaged the Signoras Bellinzettos in discourse.

"Have you any information respecting the Signora di Berlotti, my dear young friend?" eagerly questioned the marchesa; while the expressive eye of Cecilia most earnestly implored intelligence of her beloved parent. To the amazement and ter-

ror of both ladies, the countenance of Orazio instantly expressed the utmost distress and confusion: a deep crimson hue coloured even his open brow, and his eyes were suddenly cast downwards, while, silent and embarrassed, he appeared incapable of replying.

"Oh! in mercy! declare even the worst, rather than inflict these exquisite tortures of suspensive alarm!" faintly exclaimed the marchesa; while the poor Cecilia stood pale and transfixed by fear and the agonizing anticipation of the most dismal tidings. One glance at her beauteous pallid countenance, and the woe-fraught expression of her eyes, seemed to restore to Orazio the powers of speech, and, with faultering eagerness, he said—"I had indulged the hope of being able to prepare you, madam, and the amiable Signora Cecilia, to receive with some composure intelligence which, I grieve to say, is of a most painful nature. The Signora di Berlotti is still in the hands of the enemy, whose malicious cruelty tore her from her peaceful home, and——"

Cecilia drooped her head in silent despair and grief. Orazio paused here: in a voice of strong emotion, he added—"But she will soon be free, and restored to all the felicity which awaits her in the pious, duteous love of her admirable daughter."

Cecilia had scarcely strength to support this unexpected transition from the keenest feelings of heart-felt affliction to the most exquisite emotions of hope and joy; and

the Marchesa di Rovenza seemed fully to participate her sensations.

" Ah ! where is she ! Where is my dear, dear parent! Where is this injured—this amiable woman !" was softly, yet earnestly ejaculated by both the marchesa and Cecilia.

The sudden approach of one of the Bellinzettos prevented Orazio's reply.

This impertinently curious female advanced to ask the marchesa's opinion of something indifferent which the Count Carraci had been saying; but perceiving, on her nearer approach, the excessive agitation which neither the marchesa nor Cecilia could instantly suppress or disguise, she hesitated to speak, and, with a sly inquisitive glance, observed both for a moment, and was commencing an apology for her intrusive interruption, when the marchesa, with a repulsive look of disapprobation, silenced her, by assuring her that an apology was unnecessary and unrequired. The Signora Licinia curtsied and retreated, evidently disconcerted.

At this instant the entrance of a servant to announce that supper waited put an end to conversation, and the whole party immediately proceeded to the saloon, where, as usual, an elegant collation was spread.

This repast, however, was scarcely tasted by any one present, except the Bellinzettos. Ottavania was not present. Orazio hardly spoke; and the marchesa and Cecilia were too much interested and af-

fected by their own reflections to feel any inclination either to eat or to converse. The stay of this party at the supper-table was of course not of any long duration; and after due enquiries had been made concerning Leonardo, whose speedy recovery they found might reasonably be expected from the circumstance of his enjoying a tranquil repose, they all retired to their chambers, deeply impressed with the thoughts of the singular events of the day.

CHAP. XVIII.

The reflections of Cecilia were, however, effectually checked when she reached her own room, by the loquacious Lodelli, who, for some moments, was suffered by her indulgent young mistress to run on unmolested in a strain of wonder on the strange occurrences which had almost daily taken place since the residence of Cecilia and herself in the Rovenza family; and after making some whimsical and shrewd remarks, precisely in her own way, on the Signor Faenza's treacherous attack on Leonardo, she entreated to know what sort of a cavalier the Signor Locendro was.

This artless and natural question instantaneously filled the mind of Cecilia with dismay and apprehension; for she now recollected that as Lodelli was per-

fectly well acquainted with the features and person of Orazio, she would not fail to recognise him the instant she should again behold him, and thus there was but too much cause to dread that this well-meaning but imprudent servant might betray the secret of his being the person who so mysteriously visited the cottage of her mother. In this dilemma long reflection was unnecessary, as it was fully evident that the best method to prevent the accidental discovery, which she anticipated with so much uneasiness, would be to immediately prepare Lodelli for the sight of Orazio, by revealing to her some part of the truth. This Cecilia now did; and although the girl was extremely amazed at hearing that Orazio Angelo, who, she could not help secretly believing had been an associate of the robber Guicciardini, was the received *elevé* of the marchese and of the Signor Locendro, yet she readily promised, in the most solemn manner, to observe the most profound secrecy on the subject, and heartily thanked her lady for a piece of information so well calculated to guard her from the commission of any imprudence she might have been guilty of, had she seen him unprepared.

Scarcely had Cecilia received the grateful promises of Lodelli, ere the Signora della Albina entered the room.

Cecilia, as with a fluttering heart she recalled to mind the occasion of the signora's promised visit, dismissed her at-

tendant; and, as that lady silently placed herself on a sofa, expressed her surprise and satisfaction at seeing her at a moment in which she had not dared to hope she would have been sufficiently composed to undertake the recital she had promised to favour her with.

After a few minutes of silent agitation, the signora replied—

"The events of this evening have, indeed, rather unfitted me for the performance of the painful task of detailing a history so afflicting, yet so interesting to my feelings, as the one I am about to commence; but the present period will not admit of delay: the arrival of Orazio has rendered the marchesa doubly anxious for you to be made acquainted with his story. In the course of this narrative I shall have frequent occasion to implore your indulgence, my amiable young friend. The recollection of afflicting events, which even a considerable lapse of time from their occurrence cannot render less interesting or affecting to my heart, will not fail to renew those strong emotions which may greatly impede my recital." The signora slightly paused for a moment, and then with a sigh commenced the sad relation:—

"The Count Anafesto di Udina, the grandfather of the young Orazio, was a man possessed of the most noble principles. That haughty pride of birth which but too generally distinguishes the descendants of illustrious families, was in this nobleman

tempered by the generous fervor of an exalted mind, that considered its elevation in society as the most forcible motive to virtue. The actions of the Count Anafesto were therefore always the results of unerring nobleness of soul. Devoted to the service of his country, he spent most of his early years in arms, and at an advanced period of life married a lady not much younger than himself, but eminently distinguished for her amiable qualities. This marriage was blessed with one son—the brave Costanza di Udina, the father of Orazio.

" Costanza, from the earliest dawn of intelligence, displayed the strongest propensities to every virtuous and inestimable quality that can adorn human nature; and each succeeding year added to his mental and personal endowments. Early destined by the count his father to tread the field of glory, his military acquirements kept equal pace with his other attainments in virtue and knowledge.

" The companion of the young Costanza's studies was his cousin, Arnolfo di Aretino, the present Marchese di Rovenza. Arnolfo was one year older than Costanza: he is the son of an only sister of the Count Anafesto di Udina.

" This lady married privately a Venetian cavalier, of a rank much inferior to her own; and this imprudent act was committed without the knowledge and approbation of the count, who indulged so much dis-

pleasure on the occasion, that he would never after behold her, nor permit her name to be mentioned in his presence. Had the Signora di Aretino united herself with a man of honour and principle, there is every reason to believe that the count her brother would not have conceived so obdurate a prejudice against her; but unhappily Di Aretino could boast only a handsome exterior and polished manners. He was a confirmed gambler—a sly, insidious rake; and he treated his lady with equal neglect and contempt, on finding that she had no hopes of being forgiven, or noticed by her brother.

"Thus estranged from her only relative—reduced to comparative poverty—secluded from almost all society, and hourly receiving every possible insult and mortification that the designing, disappointed Aretino could inflict, Ottavania (for so was she called) dragged on a miserable existence, until the death of her tormentor, which happened about ten years after her marriage, restored her to liberty, while it plunged her into all the horrors of absolute want. Di Aretino had died so truly insolvent, that he had not a single sequin left to bequeath to his miserable wife and hapless child, who was at this period about seven years old.

"The lamentable situation of the Signora di Aretino soon compelled her to make a strong appeal to the humanity and affection of the Count di Udina, who, however,

continued obstinately determined never more to see her; but he presented her with a noble income, and provided amply for her son.

"The Signora di Aretino accepted these favours with a proud, heart-rending reluctance, and soon after retired to the deep solitude of an ancient structure, situated in the gloomy Alpine mountains of the Cadorino.

"Four years passed on without the Count di Udina's hearing any thing more of his sister; but at the expiration of that period, the Contessa di Udina received a most pathetic letter from the Signora di Aretino, who described herself as dying, and entreated, as a last request, that the young Arnolfo, her son, might be taken into the protection and palace of his uncle.

"The amiable Contessa di Udina required not this earnest petition to incline her to implore her lord to succour the orphan Arnolfo; and at length her benevolent heart was gratified, by her obtaining the count's permission to receive the young Aretino at the Pallazo di Udina, provided his mother was indeed no more.

"The contessa immediately dispatched proper persons into the Ladorino, and in a short time they returned, bringing with them Arnolfo di Aretino, and an account of the signora's decease.

"To you, my dear Cecilia," continued the Signora della Albina, "who have seen the Marchese di Rovenza, it is almost

needless to describe him. You know that his countenance and person are far from being pleasing; and when, at the age of eleven, he was presented to the Count di Udina, he had still less in his appearance to interest than he has even now; for, added to his uncouth form and singularly-ordinary features, he was at that time one of the most awkward and uninformed of human beings.

"In the very first interview his ignorance was fully apparent; and the count was so much shocked, and so excessively enraged at the cruel neglect that his sister had manifested in the education of her son, that he would have driven the boy back to the obscurity of the dreary mansion he had just quitted, had not Costanza importuned him in a manner so irresistibly persuasive, that at length he yielded a most reluctant consent to the hapless Arnolfo's becoming the partner of his son's studies.

"From this moment the delighted, generous Costanza was indefatigable in his efforts to aid in the instruction of Arnolfo, who, although one year older than his noble-spirited cousin, seemed not only destitute of every advantage which education could bestow, but of every natural talent. A thousand times I have heard the marchese declare, that to Costanza's unwearied endeavours he is indebted for even the small share of knowledge which he possesses; but nothing could divest him of that innate awkwardness of air, and hesi-

tating style of speech, which still make him so remarkable

"Arnolfo was by no means insensible of his own defects; but this consciousness served only to plunge him into the most gloomy melancholy, and procured for him, from every individual in the pallazo except the amiable Costanza, the appellation of the young misanthrope; and Arnolfo suffered, in silent sorrow, the imputation of confirmed sullenness and stupidity. It was this brooding melancholy, this lamentable want of talent, and this silent endurance, that so deeply interested the generous, feeling heart of Costanza. Unfeignedly did he pity the unfortunate youth, whose want of capacity and personal defects would, he imagined, certainly render him equally useless, neglected, and miserable in society; and he sought unceasingly to alleviate these misfortunes by all the soothing kindness which compassion and friendship could suggest. If Aretino, in return for proofs of unbounded liberality and exalted goodness of heart, could not always evince a warm degree of gratitude, Costanza justly attributed this apparent coldness to an indifference of wealth, and a noble spirit, agonizingly conscious of the misery of defective powers, and only accepting favours because it could not wound the feelings of the amiable bestower, by repulsive refusals.

"Inexpressibly disliked by the Count di Udina—merely compassionated by the

countess, and secretly despised and laughed at by the domestics, the unhappy Arnolfo appeared never to experience one gleam of mental comfort, but in the contemplation of his cousin's growing excellencies; and indeed Costanza di Udina well merited to be the idol of all who beheld him. At the age of eighteen, he possessed not only the utmost perfection of which the human mind is capable, but also excelled in beauty of person. His tall, elegant figure already displayed all the majesty of a hero, and all the graces of accomplished manners. The mingled spirit and sweetness of his disposition beamed in tempered radiance from his dark, expressive eyes, and diffused over his whole countenance all that captivation which soul alone can add to beauty. His voice, modulated by tones touchingly soft, tender, and impressive, or sonorous, energetic, and commanding, was calculated to inspire all the varied feelings of love and heroism. The boast, the glory, and delight of his parents, this admirable young man returned their affectionate and almost idolizing regards with duteous, filial tenderness, and gratitude; whilst the modest, manly grace of his deportment heightened every other amiable quality for which he was distinguished.

"Such was Costanza di Udina at the period of his entering the Venetian army. In the young Orazio we behold the most exact *external* similitude: how far he may equal his noble and unfortunate parent in

mental endowments remains to be proved." The signora now paused; and a melancholy sigh marked the retentive recollection of Costanza's virtues, and the doubtful fear that whispered the possibility that the son might not inherit the father's excellencies. A sympathetic sigh heaved the artless bosom of Cecilia; and the glowing blush that had betrayed her recognition of Orazio's portrait in the description of the Count di Udina, faded from her cheek, at the suggestion that he might prove less noble-minded and less amiable than his estimable, but unfortunate parent. She spoke not, however; and the signora resumed her narration.

"Soon after the young Count di Udina had entered the army, an opportunity occurred for him to distinguish himself with the highest honour. At the taking of Lepanto from the Turks, in the year 1687, he displayed such intrepid valour, united with so much coolness and address, and obtained so many important advantages, as crowned his name with unfading laurels, and would have gained him the most brilliant promotion, had not the severe and almost mortal wounds which he had received incapacitated him from farther service at that time. Reluctantly compelled to quit the field of honour, and return to his native city for the recovery of his health, he received, on his arrival at Venice every possible testimony of the delight and approbation which his courage and military talents merited,

mingled with the most unfeigned sorrow and regret at his mournful situation.

"The young hero felt his spirit burn with animation at his country's praises; but the ardour of valour could not impart health and power to his wounded frame; and he was compelled to exert his patience and fortitude beneath the irksome restraint of a long confinement. It is almost needless for me to paint to you, my amiable Cecilia, the agony and distress of the Count and Countess di Udina on this occasion. It was such as the parents of Costanza alone could feel: yet while they wept the fatal chance of war that had reduced the object of their dearest, proudest hopes to such a state, they exulted in that successful valour which had rendered him their country's boast and idol; and as with anxious, fearful tenderness they watched his slow recovery, could not refrain from anticipating all the future glory which they predicted would follow his steps. And yet—such is the fallibility of human foresight, and of human hopes!—it was at this very period that the circumstance occurred which led to a train of events that blighted all the reviving prospects of Costanza, and finally terminated in the ruin of his family and himself."

Agitated, and almost breathless from the violence of her feelings, the Signora della Albina arose, and, with unequal pace, walked about the room. The sensible and comprehensive mind of Cecilia told her

that consolation could not be offered at a moment such as this; and she awaited, in compassionate and reverential silence, for the returning composure of her, whose present excess of grief evinced the force of the friendship she had cherished for that family whose fate she still so feelingly bewailed.

CHAP. XIX.

The short indulgence of yielding a few moments to the grief that oppressed her heart considerably relieved the mind of the signora; and, with some degree of serenity, she again resumed her interesting history.

"During the absence of Costanza in Turkey, the Count di Udina, his father, had become the guardian of two orphan sisters, bequeathed to his care by the will of their only surviving parent, the widow of a noble Venetian, who had died during his children's infancy. The fortunes of these amiable young ladies were large, and the Signora Loredana, their mother, had preferred placing them under the guardianship and protection of the universally-respected Count and Countess of Udina, to the alternative of suffering them to remain in the convent in which they had been brought up; for, as they had no relations living, she dreaded the probability of these

lovely girls being induced to take the veil—a mode of life which she did not approve of their adopting; and as the youngest had been contracted, even from infancy, to the son of a Venetian senator, once the most valued friend of the Signor Giordano Loredana, her deceased husband, the signora rationally decided, that the marriage was more likely to take place beneath the roof of the Count di Udina than in a convent.

"No sooner therefore were the remains of the Signora Loredana consigned to the cold grave, than her lovely, weeping daughters were conveyed by the Countess di Udina to the pallazo of the latter, where they experienced from that amiable lady all the tender consolations and endearing sympathy which her gentle nature and benevolent heart so well instructed her to offer to the youthful, afflicted sisters.

"Helena and Veronica Loredana, lovely, amiable, and accomplished, far above any females of their age and country, were rendered as attractive by their virtues as by their extreme beauty. Faint are the traces which deep affliction and time have permitted to remain on the once lovely features and form of the Marchesa di Rovenza to prove what she was, when, as Helena Loredana, she first entered the Pallazo di Udina; yet beautiful as she then appeared, she was much inferior to her sister. Veronica was undoubtedly one of the most perfect beauties of that day,

nor was her mind less admirable than her face and person. Soon after the introduction of these charming sisters to the Pallazo di Udina, they became the theme of general conversation in Venice, and numberless were the noblemen and cavaliers who sighed to obtain their hands; but the Countess di Udina, acting in conformity to the will of the Signora Loredana, secluded the young ladies as much as possible from society till the marriage of Veronica to the Signor Geronimo Ollivetto, the young Venetian, to whom she was betrothed, should be concluded. Ollivetto was gay, amiable, and rather handsome, and enthusiastically attached to his beautiful, intended bride; consequently he waited with the utmost impatience for the moment that was to unite them.

"The day on which Veronica should attain her seventeenth year was appointed, by the will of her mother, for the celebration of her nuptials with the Signor Ollivetto; and, at her entrance into the Pallazo di Udina, seven months were wanted to compleat that period. The lover, however, was permitted every proper access to the fair object of his devotions, who, notwithstanding she received him with all the submission due to the commands and intentions of her deceased parent, could not conceal that he was not the being whom her heart could approve.

"The lovely sisters had not been inhabitants of the Pallazo di Udina more than

a month, when Costanza returned wounded from Lepanto. For some weeks no interview took place between the young Udina and the captivating wards of his father; but when, at length, the young man was sufficiently convalescent to join the family-party, an introduction followed; and in the first moment he beheld Veronica Loredana he conceived for her that indelible affection which ended but with his life.

"To trace the progress of a passion which soon became mutual, and which eventually occasioned such dreadful misfortunes, is as much beyond my wish as my power. Suffice it to inform you, that this unfortunate attachment so entirely subdued the good sense and delicacy of Costanza and Veronica, that, yielding to their circumstances and the ungoverned impulses of affection, they had resolved on a clandestine union, which would certainly have taken place at that period, had not Arnolfo di Aretino revealed the secret of the lovers' wild intentions to Helena Loredana. This young man, who still continued an inmate of the pallazo, and led the life of listless uselessness to which his deplorable want of talents for any public business had doomed him, was still the favorite of Costanza, and the confidant of his passion for Veronica; although he invariably endeavoured, with as much eloquence as he could exert, to dissuade his amiable cousin from the indulgence of an attachment so imprudently cherished for one who must

either become the wife of Ollivetto, or forfeit the principal part of her fortune, and enter a convent for life. But Costanza was equally deaf to argument or to entreaty; and conscious that the count his father would never sanction the breach of Veronica's engagements with the Signor Ollivetto, at length persuaded the lovely object of his affection to consent to a clandestine union.

"No sooner had Arnolfo confided to Helena the important secret of Veronica's imprudent assent to her lover's plan, than that amiable girl flew to the apartment of her sister, and, with tears and entreaties the most heartfelt and affecting, implored her not to degrade herself, and incense the Count di Udina, by allying herself in secret to his family. Veronica, deeply blushing at the contemplation of the impropriety into which love had hurried her, promised to retract the consent she had given to Costanza; but at the same time declared, in the most solemn manner, that she never would wed Ollivetto.

"Helena was compelled to be satisfied with this concession, and forbore at that time to enter into any further discourse on the subject.

"Veronica now received Ollivetto with increasing coldness and dislike; yet, as he never saw her but in the presence of the Countess di Udina and Helena, and as her usual manner was placidly reserved and silent, the young senator perceived no very

striking change in the looks or demeanor of his intended bride. The countess, however, observed with the utmost pity and regret that her young ward would never be happy in the alliance with Ollivetto, and at length discovered the mutual attachment of Veronica and her son.

" Shocked and distressed beyond measure at this untoward circumstance, she communicated the discovery she had made to the count, her husband, who, trembling lest the honour of his son's name might suffer by his clandestine pretensions to Veronica, spoke for the first time in the voice of displeasure to Costanza, and peremptorily forbade him to think any more of the Signora Veronica Loredana, adding a positive assurance that his consent should never be given to his addressing that young lady, unless she were freed from her engagements with the Signor Ollivetto.

" Costanza listened to this decree with silent respect, but gave no promise to obey the count's harsh injunctions.

" Veronica was now, by the command of the countess, secluded in her own apartment, and preparations were immediately commenced for her marriage with Ollivetto, it being in the power of the count, as her guardian, to abridge the time appointed for the celebration of her intended nuptials.

" Meanwhile the Count di Udina had repeated interviews with his son; and had Costanza been at that period sufficiently

well to rejoin his regiment, he would have been forced by the mandate of his father to do so.

" Deprived of the sight of his adored Veronica, he confined himself solely to his apartment, and seemed to await in silent despair the approaching nuptials; while Veronica, apparently yielding to her fate, offered no arguments against the precipitation with which the count had judged it necessary to forward her union with the Signor Ollivetto, who, now more than suspecting the cause of all this haste, was as wildly impatient to call Veronica his, as was the Count di Udina anxious to behold her once his wife.

" At length that nuptial morn, so much desired by Ollivetto—so much dreaded by the hapless Veronica, arrived. The Countess di Udina entered the chamber of the intended bride at the earliest approach of morn. This amiable woman had hastened thither with the light of the dawn, to endeavour to console and inspire the young Veronica with fortitude to support the approaching moment of unavoidable trial; for although she would have selected her from all the females she had ever beheld as the one most suited to become the wife of her son, yet the countess was too proudly just and honorable to wish her such at the expence of that virtuous integrity which she knew should be observed towards Ollivetto. Dark and silent was the chamber

of Veronica when the countess softly entered it: the crimson damask curtains of the latticed windows were closely drawn together. With a gentle hand the countess drew them aside, and advanced towards the bed, on which she imagined the lovely girl had wept herself into a heavy slumber. —Unclosing the festooned curtains that shaded the pillow of Veronica, she bent over the couch with a look of anxious, tender compassion, but instantly started back. The bed was empty, and its unruffled state declared that Veronica had not rested in it that night. Incapable of motion, the countess uttered a heartfelt shriek. Her cry instantaneously summoned some female attendants who had accompanied her to the anti-room. Half wild, with a thousand vague and undefined terrors, she discovered to her women the occasion of her alarm, and rushed from the apartment, distractedly calling on the names of Veronica and her son.

"In a few minutes all the inhabitants of the pallazo were aroused, and the utmost confusion ensued; for, horrible to relate, it was soon ascertained that Costanza di Udina, and Veronica Loredana, had fled from the pallazo during the night, and the Signor Ollivetto was found inhumanly murdered in his bed."

An involuntary exclamation of horror and astonishment uttered by Cecilia, interrupted the dreadful recital of the Sig-

nora della Albina; and for some moments the faculties of the narrator and the auditor seemed enchained in awe-struck silence.

CHAP. XX.

Pale as death, and in a voice scarcely audible, the signora continued the mournful history:—"The Signor Ollivetto had passed the night in the pallazo at the most express invitation of the Count di Udina. The moment that the affrighted domestics had made the horrible facts of Ollivetto's murder, and the flight of the criminal lovers, known to the count, that venerable man heaved a deep groan—feebly sighed forth the name of his wretched son, and fell back lifeless into the arms of Arnolfo di Aretino, who, trembling and aghast, seemed scarcely to possess strength to sustain, even for a moment, his awful burthen.

"Meanwhile, the hapless Countess di Udina made the concave roofs of the marble halls resound with loud, convulsive, and heart-rending shrieks, till nature, exhausted by the agonies of such a moment, subsided into all the death-like apathy of incurable despair. The situation of Helena almost defies description. She lost not her senses; but her sufferings were such as would have rendered insanity a blessing. I was even at that period the most intimate friend of Helena, and was

on a visit to her in the Pallazo di Udina, and thus became an agonised witness of those terrible events that brought utter ruin and indelible disgrace upon the house of Udina. In a few hours all Venice rang with the horrid tale, and an immediate investigation of the facts was commenced by the express order of the council.

" Proper officers soon entered the pallazo on judicial authority, and every soul within it was put under an arrest, while the most diligent search took place throughout the splendid edifice.

" Compelled, under all the horrors of such a situation, to make formal depositions for the information of the state inquisition, we soon discovered, from the questions asked us, that the unfortunate Costanza was not only accused as the murderer of the young senator Ollivetto, but that he was also accused of having entered into a conspiracy of the most serious nature against the life of the doge, and to overthrow the government.

" Papers, certifying a secret correspondence with some of the enemies of the state, were found in his private escrutoire, and he was soon after placarded as a murderer and a traitor, and an unequalled price offered for his apprehension.

" During these proceedings, Arnolfo di Aretino underwent several severe examinations before the tremendous council of the state-inquisition, but it was perfectly well proved that he had been utterly uncon-

cerned in the horrible occurrences that had taken place; and his having informed Helena of the intentions of Costanza and Veronica, respecting their projected clandestine union, was received as an evident proof of his not having been acquainted with, nor approved of any of the criminal schemes of his most unfortunate cousin.

" The innocence of Aretino thus manifested, he was set at liberty, and invested with the princely possessions of the Udina family, so unhappily forfeited by the crimes of Costanza.

" It was at this lamentable period that Arnolfo di Aretino seemed awakened into a display of sense and feeling, which excited astonishment in the minds of all those who had hitherto known him. The excess of the misfortunes which had overwhelmed his family, seemed to inspire him with new power, or, at least, to call forth those intellectual qualities which till then had lain dormant in his soul; and he exerted himself in such efforts to clear the name of Costanza from the imputation of Ollivetto's assassination, as almost shook the general belief that the latter had been guilty of that deed. The endeavours of Arnolfo to this effect, though chiefly founded on surmise, were justified by the following circumstance.

" The Signor di Ollivetto had had a servant, a Neapolitan by birth, and of a disposition sly, fawning, and cruel; yet he was insinuating, active, and one of the

most perfect buffos of his nation. This man had been dismissed from the service of the Signor Ollivetto for some trifling offence, and had been heard by several people in his own station to mutter many threats of revenge; and it was actually proved that he had been seen lurking about the Pallazo di Udina on the very evening of the night on which the murder was committed. The suspicion that he might have been the murderer, seemed confirmed by his being no where to be found in Venice after that night. The zeal with which Arnolfo sought to remove the odium of Ollivetto's assassination from Costanza to Bion dello di Balvo, so was this man called, evinced the gratitude and affection with which he regarded his unfortunate cousin, while his grief was equally heart-felt—deep and unaffected.

"Meanwhile Costanza and Veronica remained untraced to the retreat to which they must have flown; and several months elapsed without the least prospect of discovering where they had concealed themselves, notwithstanding the powerful and wealthy family of the Ollivettos were indefatigable in aiding the state in their researches after the fugitives. But to return to the period of the arrestation at the Pallazo di Udina:—A few days only elapsed ere the officers quitted the palace; and the return of Arnolfo from the chambers of the inquisition was the signal for the funeral of the Count di Udina, who

was interred in the most private manner by order of the state. The countess did not survive him above a week, and was buried in a similar style. Helena Loredana was removed to the convent of Benedictines, whither I accompanied her by the express permission of my father, who was my only parent then living. Arnolfo di Aretino now, by a decree of the senate, Marchese di Rovenza, took a most mournfully formal possession of the estates of the Udinas, and as soon as propriety would permit, solicited the hand of Helena Loredana.

"This amiable girl, immersed in the deepest affliction for the fate of her sister, received this proposal with the utmost surprise, and with a degree of pleasure which resulted from the most generous motives. She immediately desired a private interview with the Marchese di Rovenza, who instantly attended her summons. At this interview I was present. The person of the marchese was too unattractive for any mortal to suppose that *love* influenced Helena to consent to become his wife, and as she was now entirely her own mistress, there was no one that had power to compel her to give him her hand. But she wished to assist and succour her unfortunate sister, should there ever be an opportunity of doing so, and as the wife of a man possessed of rank and wealth, she knew she should be better enabled to serve her still beloved Veronica, than she could be in a convent.—

In a short time, therefore, Helena became Marchesa di Rovenza, and her marriage took place with the utmost privacy. About the same period I was united to the Signor della Albina, but I still continued my friendship and intimacy with Helena. In less than a year she became a mother, and I a widow.

"The death of my father, which happened soon after that of my husband, plunged me into still deeper sorrow, and in the Marchesa di Rovenza I found my best consoler. At this period she chiefly resided at this villa with her infant son Leonardo.

"Another year passed on, yet still Costanza and Veronica remained undiscovered. It is needless, I believe, for me to say how much the marchesa continued to endure while suffering all the suspensive dread and sorrow which the uncertain and fearful fate of her beloved sister caused her to experience.—Alas! the fate of Veronica was soon after fully decided.

"One evening, when I was sitting with my friend beneath the portico which opens from the south saloon into the gardens, the marchese abruptly entered, and after a very slight preparatory warning not to be too much alarmed, he informed us that Costanza had been apprehended at Padua, and that Veronica was confined by a second *accouchment* at the private villa of a friend, who sheltered her with the most tender care.

'She must be removed hither as soon

as possible," added the marchese, " that she may be kept ignorant of the apprehension of her lord, at least till her recovered health shall enable her to learn his fate with some degree of fortitude.—It will be most advisable, however, to leave the children under the protection of her amiable friend, as, should my unfortunate cousin be condemned, his descendants will not only be deprived of all hopes of ever possessing the titles and domains of their ancestors, but will also be decreed aliens, and banished for ever from the Venetian states.'

" The voice of Rovenza, as he gave utterance to this dreadful intelligence, was hardly audible. An exclamation of horror and incredulity escaped the trembling lips of the marchesa, and I sat terror-struck and immoveable. Again the marchese faintly declared that such he feared was the determined intentions of the council, and to which cruel resolve, he believed, they had been greatly urged by the Ollivetto family, who still persisted that Costanza di Udina was the murderer of the Signor Geronimo Ollivetto.---The marchese then requested that his lady would immediately set off for the villa where Veronica was then concealed: the amiable Helena required not a second intreaty to prepare for the excursion. I accompanied her, and we reached the retired villa of the Count and Countess di Mirandini about dark; and here we found a scene of the

utmost distress.---Alas! these amiable friends of the hapless Costanza and Veronica were involved in the ruin which overwhelmed the miserable pair they had sheltered---The Count di Mirandini, but a few hours previous to our arrival, had received a most friendly, but anonymous notice, that the senate, suspecting him to be deeply concerned in the conspiracy in which Costanza di Udina had engaged, had given orders for his speedy arrest, and that he would most probably be apprehended before the morning, unless he availed himself of this early knowledge of the intentions of the state, and fled from the Venetian territories with all possible haste. The count, well convinced that there was, indeed, too much reason to dread the information conveyed in this timely warning, was but too true, instantly determined to flee, and taking a most affectionate leave of his lady, he quitted the villa in the utmost privacy, disguised as a female, and bearing away with him the infant son of the ruined Costanza. Whither he intended to bend his course, the countess did not say, and it was not a subject to make many enquiries about at that time.

"After receiving this sad information, and all the attentions which the afflicted state of the amiable lady of the villa would permit her to shew us, we were conducted to the chamber where Veronica reposed. Still unconscious of the seizure of her lord, by the Sbirri of Venice, her surprise at

seeing us was mingled with the most heart-felt joy; we soon discovered that this hapless wife was wholly ignorant that her beloved husband, herself, and her children, were utterly undone.---The tender love of the wretched Costanza had carefully concealed from her the dreadful events that had marked their flight from Venice, and she was yet to learn that he was considered and pursued as a murderer and a traitor, and would soon suffer the dreadful sentence of the law as such.

"The discovery of Veronica's unconsciousness of the real situation of her lord struck the heart of Helena with new sorrow and amazement, and while she venerated the affection and friendship which had thus long concealed from the knowledge of her sister the calamitous fate which her secret union with Costanza had brought upon the Udina family, herself, and innocent offspring, she felt her mind heavily oppressed by the fearful anticipation of the fatal consequences which would but too probably attend the explanation which Veronica must soon receive of her affairs.

"Ignorant even that the Count di Udina was no more, she imagined, the moment that she beheld us, that we came to announce to her that he had relented, and withdrew his displeasure from his son, and was willing to acknowledge her as his daughter-in-law. The grief-fraught looks of Helena convinced her she was mistaken in her supposition, and, bursting into tears,

she held up to our gaze a lovely infant girl, which had slept on her bosom since the time we entered, and demanded, whether the cruel Count di Udina meant to extend to her hapless babes the unjust indignation with which he regarded her Costanza.---She then called to a female attendant in waiting, and commanded her son to be brought to her.

" The young woman, informed that the child had been taken away by the Count di Mirandini, hesitatingly said, that she had put the lovely boy to bed, and Veronica apologized to us for not being able to present him to us that night.

" The marchese then proposed to her, removing to the Villa di Rovenza. She knew that Helena was now Marchioness di Rovenza, and the wife of Arnolfo di Aretino, although ignorant by what sad events the latter had obtained his title; and desirous of being no longer burthensome to the good and amiable Mirandini, she accepted the proposal of residing for some time at the villa of her relatives.

" Scarcely had she given this consent, when a dreadful noise was heard in the villa :---strange voices echoed along the gallery leading to the room in which we were ; and suddenly, to our utter consternation, the door was thrown open ; and a large party of the Venetian police entered.

" The sight of the lovely, undone Veronica, half resting on the couch, and, with a mother's tender and distracting fears, clasp-

ing still closer to her beating heart the beauteous babe which still reclined in her arms, suspended for one short moment the steps of the leader of the sbirri.---As if irresistibly struck by the fascinating appearance of the young and hapless mother, he waved his hand to forbid the further advance of his followers, and with an air of respect, and looks of surprise and admiration, said, that he much regretted that his duty had compelled him to so abrupt an entrance, but as he durst not withdraw his men till they had made the most minute search through every apartment of the villa for the Count di Mirandini, he could only promise to be as expeditious as possible in the research.

"Shocked beyond the power of uttering a single enquiry, Veronica sat, pale, silent and trembling. The officer seemed to misconceive the cause of her alarm, and of course imagining her well informed of the dreadful situation of her lord, he added, —'I have no authority to arrest *you*, madam, and I am sorry that the count your husband has had the misfortune of involving the Count di Mirandini in his own awful fate.'

"To describe the horrible scene that now ensued is beyond all mortal power—suffice it, that the measure of the wretched Veronica's woes was now full.--The entire development of her husband's real situation—the crimes he was accused of—and

his imprisonment in the terrific dungeons of St. Mark, all burst upon her horrored soul at once.

"The unparalleled shock which such an awfully sudden discovery might be supposed to give, seemed but too well calculated to instantly deprive her of her senses, and produce the wildest flights of frenzy; but the ruined Veronica was not thus affected. —The moment she had heard the first words that awakened her to a sense of her idolized Costanza's dreadful state, she threw the infant into the arms of the female attendant who stood beside her, and hastily rising, grasped the arm of the officer, and while the most singular and inexplicable expression marked her countenance, and death's most pallid hue overspread her beauteous features, in low and solemn accents she demanded to know the nature of those crimes of which her lord was accused.

"Do you not know, lady, that treason and murder are crimes of the most serious nature?' exclaimed the amazed leader of the terrific band who had now commenced their search in the apartment. 'The conspiracy was sufficient to have fixed the count's fate. We need not have taken the trouble of adding the murder of one of the noble house of the Ollivetto to that crime.'

"The Signor Geronimo has been murdered, then?' murmured Veronica: the

tones of her voice were now so altered, that they could hardly be recognized as her's.

" One of the men, whom curiosity or interest had induced to stand a listener to this conversation, now caught the other arm of the principal officer, and, with ill-timed want of consideration, exclaimed, ' Don't answer the lady any more questions: you'll frighten her to death, just as the poor old Count and Countess di Udina were killed with the fright of their son's ill conduct.'

" Veronica relinquished her hold of the officer's arm, and cast on the last speaker a look so woe-struck and heart-broken, that it might have penetrated a heart cold and unfeeling as the unconscious marble. She then walked slowly to the sofa, muttering to herself, ' Murder and treason!' and with her hands closely clasped together, and her head drooping, she sat down, and remained in that attitude, apparently insensible to every object around her.

" The sbirri, soon convinced that the Count di Mirandini was not concealed in the villa, at length quitted it in pursuit of the fugitive.

" When assured of their departure, I reluctantly left the hapless Veronica and the marchese to the care of the female attendants, and descended to the lower apartments, in order to ascertain the situation of the unfortunate Contessa di Mirandini, whom I found in strong convulsions, from

which, however, she soon recovered, only to be conveyed to her apartment in a state nearly approaching to mental derangement.

"Amidst this scene of horrors, the confusion that prevailed generally among the domestics heightened the distress and perplexity in which I found myself involved respecting the removal of Veronica to the Villa di Rovenza. The Marchesa di Rovenza, nearly distracted by the dreadful situation of her miserable sister, was quite incapable of giving any directions, and although I earnestly desired to accompany them from the Villa di Mirandini, I thought it would be both cruel and ungrateful to leave the generous and humane countess without a single friend to watch over or console her.

"I was in this state of distress and irresolution, when, to my extreme surprise, the Marchese di Rovenza suddenly entered. My looks were sufficiently indicative of the dreadful scene in which I had so recently been engaged, and to the marchese's eager enquiries as to what had occasioned my evident consternation and trouble, I replied, by a brief relation of the circumstances which had just occurred.

"It was some time ere he could sufficiently recover the shock my information gave him, to be able to tell me that he had come to the Villa di Mirandini, purposely to attend his lady and her unfortunate sister to the Villa di Rovenza, adding that

he was almost certain that he could obtain permission to offer an asylum for life to Veronica, notwithstanding the crimes and the fate of her lord.

" As the marchese now urged that the departure of the marchesa and Veronica ought immediately to take place, provided the latter was not utterly incapable of being removed, I led him to the chamber where the lovely cause of his principal uneasiness still remained in the same dismal state of despair and silence, which had seized her at the moment of the dreadful discovery of her husband's real situation.

" The grief of the marchese at beholding the affecting spectacle which the despondING, hopeless woe of Veronica, and the agonizing misery of the marchesa presented to his view, was great beyond the power of utterance.---But I will not distress you further, my amiable young friend, by continuing to describe a scene, that *I* cannot even remember at this period, without experiencing the deepest horror and affliction.---Let it then suffice to acquaint you, that the undone Veronica was carried, nearly insensible, to the carriage of the marchesa, who, with her lord, accompanied the hapless object of their anxious cares to their own home, leaving me at the Villa di Mirandini, to pay those attentions to the contessa, which her situation, and her friendship to the unfortunate Costanza and Veronica so well entitled her to receive. Nor was I less occupied by my anxiety for

the dear infant daughter of the sister of my beloved friend. The lovely babe, who, at the command of the Marchese di Rovenza, still remained at the Villa di Mirandini, was, however, so carefully cherished by her nurse, a young woman who appeared to possess an affectionate heart and steady principles, that she was as well attended to as I could hope or desire.

" For ten days I continued at the Villa di Mirandini, and during that short space of time, I had the satisfaction of seeing the amiable contessa recovering from the first effects of the shock which had thrown her into so mournful a situation. I had also the melancholy gratification of receiving from the sincere friend of Veronica some account of the circumstance which first introduced them to each other, and produced that friendship which induced the Count and Contessa di Mirandini to encounter the hazard of sheltering and protecting the unfortunate pair, whose fate was environed with such appalling dangers. From this account I learned that Mirandini had been one of the boyish friends of Costanza di Udina, and was attached to to him by the ties of early gratitude for some services that had been rendered him in the very commencement of their acquaintance; and which, although of a trivial nature, had yet made an impression on the mind of the Count di Mirandini, which neither time nor absence could obliterate. The Count was a native of Tuscany, but

he had resided many years in Venice with an uncle, to whose fortune he was heir. On the death of this relation, he had returned to his native country, after having taken possession of the estates left him by his uncle. Soon after his return into Tuscany he married his amiable countess, and they were enjoying all the felicity which attends an union founded on mutual affection and esteem, when Mirandini received a letter from Costanza di Udina, informing him of his intentions to form a clandestine union with Veronica Loredana, and requesting that his friend would seek for his accommodation some lonely and secluded retreat, where he could place his lovely bride, till the displeasure of his family should in some measure subside.—A reply, dictated more by the enthusiasm of friendship than prudence, was immediately dispatched by the Count di Mirandini, containing a most earnest request that Costanza would make the pallazo of his friend the residence of his charming intended bride, where the Countess di Mirandini was impatient to welcome her.

"This letter determined Costanza to fly with his Veronica into Tuscany, and place her under the protection of these amiable friends, while he himself intended to rejoin his regiment, which was still abroad, and from thence solicit the forgiveness of the count his father.

"Veronica, blinded by the excess of

her affection, agreed to this plan; and although she had seriously promised her sister not to enter into any secret engagements with Costanza, yet when all was discovered, and she found she might have no other method of avoiding an union with Geronimo Ollivetto, she eloped with her lover, and they arrived safely at Florence, entirely unconscious of the dreadful circumstances that had marked their flight from the Pallazo di Udina at Venice---at least, so supposed the Count and Countess di Mirandini, by whom they were received with every possible testimonial of pleasure and regard.

"The lovers had been united previous to their reaching Florence, and for a few days they enjoyed every happiness that could attend such a marriage. On the fourth day after their arrival at the Pallazo of the Count di Mirandini, the wretched Costanza received a letter from his cousin Arnolfo, who was privy to the place of his retirement; and this letter contained, in the most softened terms, a dreadful detail of the events that had followed his precipitate elopement from Venice. Fortunately Veronica was not present at the moment her husband received this alarming letter. No language could paint the distraction of her undone Costanza, and it was with the utmost difficulty that the horror-stricken Mirandini, to whom the contents of the letter was immediately communicated by his friend, could prevent

his setting off instantly for Venice, to confront his accusers.

"The murder of Ollivetto, the conspiracy, all was solemnly denied by Costanza; but although the Count di Mirandini was fully inclined to credit his friend's declarations of innocence, he well knew that precipitancy might only confirm his ruin, as he could produce no proofs of his innocence sufficient to invalidate the charges exhibited against him; and at length persuaded him to relinquish his design of hastening to Venice, till he should first endeavour to procure some further accounts of the horrible and mysterious occurrences that then rendered his return to Venice so alarmingly hazardous. —These arguments, however, would have been of small avail to influence Costanza, had not his ardent affection for his idolized Veronica induced him to listen to the voice of friendship and reason, and at length he consented to adopt any plan which the Count di Mirandini should point out as best calculated to ensure present safety, and to hide from his lovely bride the dire misfortunes that had attended their union.

"Mirandini, who justly considered that immediate concealment and seclusion was indispensibly essential to the present safety of his friend, and the peace of Veronica, proposed that Costanza should directly leave Florence, and retire to a small

fortress which he possessed in the Appennines, and there in secrecy wait for further intelligence relating to the proceedings at Venice.

" To account to Veronica for this necessary seclusion was not difficult, as it was pretended to be in consequence of the Count di Udina's having resolved to tear her from the arms of his son, and employ all his power to annul their marriage.

" Excrutiating appeared the mental sufferings of Costanza on this occasion. To fly to secrecy and concealment, instead of boldly facing every danger which could threaten him, was equally repugnant to his noble disposition and his principles; but when he thought of Veronica's anguish and despair—the despair of her whose tender affection for himself had led her even into the imprudence of a clandestine union, love pleaded in his bosom with irresistible force, and endeavouring to hide the anguish of his heart, he sought her, and informing her that the displeasure of the count his father would soon separate them, unless they fled from his power, proposed an immediate journey to the Appennines.

" Veronica was shocked, but not surprised at this intelligence; and attributing the wild, distracted looks of her husband to his dread of the threatened separation, she instantly gave her assent, and that night accompanied him to the nearly deserted

and dreary fortress in which the friendly and afflicted Mirandini had granted them an asylum.

"Two faithful domestics, on whom they could rely, were appointed by the Count and Countess di Mirandini to attend the hapless couple to the fortress of Zamora; and, after a journey of three tedious days, Costanza and Veronica found themselves voluntarily immured within the dark walls of a decaying fortress, where, however, they found apartments which were rendered comfortable at least by the assiduous cares and exertions of the domestics who had accompanied them hither, and an old man and woman that usually resided in this remote and almost unknown edifice, which, seated in one of the most wild and unfrequented valleys of the Appennines, was equally beyond the observation of the traveller or the pilgrim. But while Costanza di Udina, internally consumed by the secret anguish of his soul, lingered out moments of almost undesired existence in the deep solitude of the fortress of Zamora, his friend Mirandini was cautiously but actively employed in attempts to discover whether any hope existed of his ever being enabled to assert his innocence of the crimes imputed to his charge, and the commission of which was so solemnly denied by him. For this purpose the count secretly addressed Arnolfo di Aretino, but received such an answer as effectually convinced him that Costanza must either pass

away his life as an unknown exile, or return to his own country only to suffer an ignominious death. The letter which brought this cruel confirmation of all Mirandini's fears, contained bills to a very large amount for the use of the undone Costanza, but payable to the Count di Mirandini. A promise of continued supplies, and a request to be made acquainted with the place of retreat which Costanza might choose, concluded the epistle—an epistle which charmed the count, as it evinced to him that Arnolfo was indeed deserving of the regard that Costanza had always felt for him. The count, however, did not think it proper to send an answer to Arnolfo's letter till after he had first seen and consulted with his unfortunate friend; and for this intent he made a secret journey into the Appennines. Every faint beam, which hope had hitherto thrown on the darkened prospects of Costanza, expired in the mind of the latter on the perusal of his cousin's letter. He perceived that his fate was indeed decided, and that it would be vain to struggle to render invalid a combination of circumstances so fatally calculated to undo him. The very suspicion of a traitorous intention he well knew was certain destruction in Venice; and he felt convinced that he had no proofs to adduce of his never having entered into any correspondence with an enemy of the state; for the letter of Arnolfo positively asserted that copies of

letters in his own hand-writing had been found, which had confirmed, beyond all doubt, his criminality. It also added that none of his accomplices had been as yet discovered, as the papers found in his cabinet gave no intimation respecting the names or situations of the other persons concerned in the plot.

"Agonizing rage and despair are said to have almost distracted Costanza on the perusal of this letter; and he scrupled not to accuse the deceased Ollivetto as the author of a diabolical plot to undo him, and bring ruin on his family—a plot which could have been projected only by jealous hatred and malicious envy. That the young senator certainly did consider Costanza with all those sentiments of dislike, envy, and indignation, which rivalry in love but too often inspires, is most true; and it is highly probable that he might have been influenced by jealousy to devise the plan of the pretended conspiracy to procure the destruction of the man whom he well knew would ever retain a decided preference in the heart of his lovely, betrothed wife. That Ollivetto was murdered by the servant whom he had suddenly discharged in a fit of passion, appears to be equally probable, especially as the man was not to be found after the commission of that dreadful deed; but that murder having been perpetrated at the exact time of the unfortunate Costanza's flight with Veronica Loredana, furnished a fatally

presumptive proof that he alone had been the assassin of the luckless Ollivetto. Thus doomed to fall the victim of appearances, the miserable Udina had no alternative but those of either resolving to pass the remainder of his wretched days in voluntary exile, or give himself up to the horrible and ignominious fate which awaited him at Venice. To face his accusers—to brave death in its most awful shapes, would have been the immediate choice of Costanza, rather than bear the imputation of having flown from a punishment unmerited; but the remonstrances of his friend Mirandini, the representations of his still adored Veronica's agonising sufferings, and the whispered hope that time might present some providential means of establishing his innocence, at length sufficed to render him in some degree apparently submissive to his misfortunes, and he formed the resolution of continuing some time longer in the secure retreat which the fortress of Zamora afforded him.

"The bills which Aretino had sent to him he accepted, but requested the Count di Mirandini to inform his generous cousin that he should require no further assistance, as what he had now received would be sufficient to provide him a subsistence in a foreign land, whither he intended soon to fly. Such was certainly Costanza's intention when he desired Arnolfo should be so informed, yet he did not mean to quit Italy at so early a period

as he wished his cousin to suppose; but reluctant to hold a correspondence which he imagined might at some unfortunate moment involve Aretino in the destruction that had overtaken himself, he adopted a slight degree of evasion, in order to save a beloved relative from the danger which must inevitably attend a discovery of their correspondence.

"The Count di Mirandini, fully approving this friendly precaution, promised faithfully to observe Costanza's directions respecting the answer to Aretino, and departed from the Appennines, leaving his ruined friend overwhelmed by affliction and despair.

"The count's reply to Arnolfo's letter was soon followed by his receiving another long epistle from the latter, filled with the most anxious enquiries respecting Costanza, and the most heartfelt lamentations for the ruin of that beloved and respected family that had been the guardians and friends of his youth. This was answered by the count with promises to inform Aretino in a short time what country Costanza had fixed on for his future abode; and here this correspondence ceased.

"The miserable Costanza, however, continued to inhabit the dreary fortress of Zamora; and, yielding to the dreadful necessity of his circumstances, endeavoured to submit in silent endurance to his fate for the sake of her, who seemed a thousand times more endeared to him by those mis-

fortunes which had driven them aliens from their country and society; and whose unconsciousness of the direful events that had followed her union with him who was dearer to her than her life, left her in some degree at liberty to console and sooth the breaking heart of her husband in those agonizing moments when he could not conceal the deep anguish of his soul. After a residence of nearly a year in the secluded fortress of Zamora, Veronica presented her lord with a son, and this son was Orazio. But the birth of this infant formed only a new source of woe to his unhappy father, whose full heart now swelled with indignant rage and sorrow at the dreadful conviction, that he had no inheritance to bequeath his heir but infamy and ruin; and again his faithful and generous friend Mirandini found the utmost difficulty in dissuading him from the rash design of hastening to Venice, in the vain hope of vindicating his honour, and proving his innocence of those charges which had banished him into so dreadful a state of obscurity and disgrace.

"The birth of her son seemed also to awaken new cares in the bosom of Veronica, who, imputing the melancholy and strange retirement in which they lived solely to the cruel intention that she had been purposely told the Count di Udina had formed of annulling her marriage with his son, could not be persuaded but that her unjust father-in-law might be induced

to relent, were he informed that she was a mother. Yet as she perceived this subject, whenever it was mentioned by her, seemed only to plunge her beloved Costanza in still deeper affliction, she forbore to urge it; and, while in secret she wept the supposed severity with which the Count di Udina resented the disobedience of his son, she assumed the placid smile of resignation in the presence of her husband.

" Several months more passed away thus, when at length a circumstance occurred that broke in some degree the sad monotony in which the mournful inhabitants of the fortress of Zamora spent their days.

" The Count di Mirandini found himself obliged to make a journey to Venice to arrange some concerns relative to the estates left to him by his uncle. The moment this journey was determined on, the count wrote to Costanza the most earnest assurances that he would leave no effort untried to discover whether there existed any probability that an attempt to convince the state of his innocence might be attended with some success.

" The illusions of hope now revived in the once ardent mind of Costanza, who hailed this journey of his friend as the certain omen of a speedy termination to his own misfortunes. An intuitive voice seemed to whisper to his heart that some fortunate circumstance would at length enable him to prove his innocence; and he therefore hailed the journey of the Count

di Mirandini to Venice as the certain prelude to the fulfilment of this involuntary expectation.

"The moment the generous friend of Costanza arrived in Venice, he sought a private interview with the Marchese di Rovenza; and, in this interview, learnt more fully the particulars which had led the marchese so reasonably to suspect that the discarded servant of the Signor Ollivetto had been the assassin of his master. To aid the marchese in the strict and private search which he declared he still continued for the discovery and apprehension of Biondella, Ollivetto's servant, was now all that the Count di Mirandini could propose; and in this he was the more eager, from entertaining a faint idea that this man might probably be acquainted with the deceased young senator's designs of ruining the brave Costanza by the false imputation of his being engaged in a plot against the state; and as, in this case, his evidence would most probably be sufficient to the establishing Costanza's innocence, his being found was of the utmost importance. Secret agents were now employed by Marandini to travel into Naples, and every other country whither the marchese appeared to suspect that Biondella had fled.

"An account of this faint hope of ultimate success was immediately written by the Count di Mirandini to his unfortunate friend, whose place of retreat in the Ap-

pennines still remained unknown even to the Marchese di Rovenza, who, with a degree of delicacy and generosity which charmed the count, forbore minute enquiries respecting the spot which his hapless relative had chosen as most suited to safety and concealment, lest, in some unguarded moment, his knowledge on the subject might be betrayed by his looks, when Costanza should be occasionally spoken of in his presence, which was a circumstance that too frequently occurred when he was in company with any of the senators.

" The business which had called the Count di Mirandini to Venice was soon concluded; but he had other affairs of the same nature to arrange at Padua, and, in consequence, determined to reside at a beautiful and retired villa a few miles from Padua; and which residence he possessed by the will of his uncle. Here the count and his lady passed two months in all the tranquillity which they could possibly feel, while their minds were so much distressed by the unfortunate state of the friends for whose fate they felt so deep an interest and concern. Compelled by circumstances not to venture to hold any regular correspondence with Costanza, and thus strangers in some degree to the manner in which he still bore his confinement in the Appennines, what was the dismay and agonizing affliction of the Count and Countess di Mirandini, when one night, Costanza, Veronica, their child, and the two attendants

who had been sent with them to the fortress of Zamora, arrived at the Villa di Mirandini near Padua. Scarcely could the dreadfully alarmed count suppress the exclamations of horror and amazement which hovered on his lips at this unexpected sight. Costanza read in his looks the emotion of his mind, and instantly requested a private interview with the Count di Mirandini, and was then led by his friend into the library, while the countess herself welcomed Veronica in the best manner that her alarm and surprise would permit her to do.

"What passed in the private interview between the count and Costanza I am not informed of; but the latter left the villa before day-break, leaving his wife and child under the protection of his excellent friends the Mirandinis.

"The count alone was perfectly well acquainted with the reasons which had induced Costanza to adopt the extraordinary resolution of venturing into the Venetian territories; but the former did not appear to derive any satisfaction from this knowledge; and there is sufficient cause to believe that he anticipated in some degree the ruin in which his generous friendship for Costanza di Udina would at last involve himself.

"The foreboding fears which tormented him on this subject, Mirandini, however, carefully concealed from his lady, who displayed a nobleness of mind equal to her

lord's, in the attentive kindness and anxious care with which she devoted her almost every thought to render the situation of Veronica as agreeable as circumstances would admit.

"Veronica, still unconscious of the dreadful occurrences that had so long banished both her husband and herself from the Venetian territories, had commenced the journey on their return thither, with a heart glowing with all the lively and pleasing emotions, which the expectation that she was hastening to behold her husband soon reconciled to a forgiving parent, and restored to all his former honours and enjoyments, was calculated to inspire in her mind. These ideas were, however, entirely of her own creating, for Castanza had not even informed her what were his motives for this journey; but as she had no reason to suppose that their long concealment in the Appennines had been occasioned by any other cause than the vindictive displeasure of the Count di Udina, she very reasonably imagined that he had relented of his unkind prejudices, when Costanza proposed their emerging from the seclusion to which the indignant anger of his father had doomed them. When, however, she found that the journey terminated at Padua, she became perplexed and unhappy; yet it was not till after her arrival at the Villa di Mirandini, and that her husband, on the conclusion of his private interview with the count, informed her

that he must leave her for a few days, that she felt her heart sink with involuntary grief and apprehension. In vain the agitated Costanza repeatedly assured her that his absence would not be of any long continuance, and that their future peace depended on their present transient separation, which would, he said, be soon succeeded by his returning to conduct her as his beloved wife to Venice. She wept in an uncontroulable agony of sorrow on his bosom, and when at length he tore himself away, she fainted.

"The violence of her emotions hastened the hour of her expected *accouchement*, and before the next day she gave birth to a daughter ; the poor infant whom the marchesa and myself beheld first on the sad day on which we visited the Villa di Mirandini, in order to conduct her home to the Villa di Rovenza. But the poor Veronica had not only the trouble usually attending on her then delicate state of health to encounter, for she suffered the most distressing anxiety respecting her beloved husband, who returned but for one short hour to the villa, and then only to pay her a secret midnight visit ; while the fleeting moments in which they were together were spent on the part of Costanza in heart-uttered regrets at the necessity which he said still existed for their again separating, and on Veronica's in vain importunities to know when the lamented necessity would cease.

"This was the last meeting that ever took place between this amiable and unfortunate couple. Costanza enfolded his beauteous wife in a last embrace, pronounced a fervent blessing on her infants, and departed, never more to return.

"In a few days after this interview, the Count di Mirandini learned that his wretched friend was in the prison of St. Mark. Conscious that his own ruin would inevitably follow that of Costanza, he had wisely prepared for the probable necessity of a hasty departure from the Venetian territories, even prior to the receipt of the friendly, but anonymous letter which positively assured him of his friend's situation, and warned him that flight alone could save himself from almost immediate arrestation."

The Signora della Albina once more paused. Her spirits, nearly exhausted by the narration of the mournful history she had undertaken to relate, were now so much depressed that she had scarcely power to proceed, although her perceiving the morning light rapidly overspreading the heavens, made her wish to hasten the conclusion of her recital.

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The momentary pause, however, in which she had indulged afforded some slight relief to her mind, and she again resumed the melancholy tale.—"The sad events which followed the precipitate flight of the Count di Mirandini from the villa are already known to you, my dear Cecilia, and I shall now return to that period when the wretched Veronica was conveyed by the Marchese and Marchesa di Rovenza from the habitation of her amiable friends to the Villa di Rovenza. I believe I have before informed you that I remained at the Villa di Mirandini in order to offer every consolation and attention in my power to the lovely and generous countess, who, gradually recovering from the overwhelming shock she had received at finding her beloved lord involved in the ruinous fate of the friend for whom they had hazarded so much, rewarded my care and anxiety on her account by relating to me the particulars respecting Costanza's and Veronica's residence in Tuscany, which I have just confided to you.

"As the countess soon found herself sufficiently well to venture to leave her room, she became importunate for me to return to the Villa di Rovenza, declaring that she was certainly convinced that my

presence must be most essential to the peace of the marchesa and her luckless sister, whose deplorable situation required every soothing attention, that the countess was pleased to say 'I so well knew how to bestow on the unfortunate.'

"The politeness of the Countess di Mirandini, however, could not veil that she was secretly and anxiously desirous that I should quit the villa; but I respected her too truly for her noble and generous conduct to that hapless pair, whose misfortunes had proved so fatal to their inestimable friends, ever to harbour the slightest wish of prying into her motives for so evidently pressing my departure, or to feel myself in the least degree mortified, or offended by the singularity of her conduct. Having, therefore, received from the countess every possible assurance that the utmost care should be taken of the infant daughter of Veronica, till the Marchese di Rovenza should direct in what manner she should be disposed of, I bade my adieu to the amiable mistress of the Villa di Mirandini, and, with a sad anticipating heart, returned to the villa.

"Here I found the marchesa confined to her apartments by the most serious indisposition, and the unfortunate Veronica labouring under all the miseries of melancholy madness: while the marchese, almost equally distracted by the misfortunes of his family, shut himself up from all society, to indulge the deep affliction that

overwhelmed him. It was not till late on the day following that of my return, that I could be permitted to see him, and then only for a few minutes, to enquire what he thought proper to do respecting the infant left at the Villa di Mirandini. The excess of the marchese's grief had hitherto prevented him from paying any attention to this point, and he now seemed equally perplexed and distressed in considering in what manner he could dispose of this hapless babe. At length, after some time spent in silent reflection, he informed me that he would send proper persons on the morrow, to take the infant from the Villa di Mirandini, and convey it into the Milanese, to be placed under the care of a lady, who, as the superior of a religious house, was perfectly qualified to take charge of a child, who, he imagined, should be brought up in total ignorance that she was born to the inheritance of rank and fortune, which had been lost to her by the crimes of a parent.

"This was a plan it was impossible for me not to approve; and I quitted the apartment of the marchese, perfectly satisfied with his judicious arrangement.

"On the next day, two of the ancient domestics, who had formerly belonged to the elder Count di Udina, and who were now retained in the service of the Marchese di Rovenza, were dispatched to the Villa di Mirandini, with instructions to take from thence the infant daughter of

their unfortunate young lord, and convey her, with all convenient speed, to the convent selected by the marchese for her future residence.

" Considering this affair as finally settled, I now devoted all my thoughts to ameliorating the sufferings of my beloved Helena, and to the careful observance that every requisite attention was paid to the poor Veronica by the medical attendants and those persons appointed to be always near her. I was in the apartment of the latter at a very late hour of the night, when I was unexpectedly summoned to attend the marchese, whom, to my extreme surprise, I found in one of the saloons, with the male and female domestic who had been sent to the Villa di Mirandini, to take away the infant Veronica. The marchese appeared to be excessively agitated, and, with much vexation, informed me, that when the servants had reached the Villa di Mirandini, they had found it entirely deserted; and on enquiring at a neighbouring cottage, they had learned that the countess, the nurse and child, and another domestic, had set off for Tuscany on the night preceding their arrival, after having discharged all the other servants.

" The abrupt and unexpected departure of the Countess di Mirandini—the silence she had observed respecting her intention, and her taking away the child in such a singular manner, were circumstances that

displeased, as much as they surprised the marchese, who, utterly at a loss how to account for a conduct so extraordinary and offensive, expressed the deepest indignation on the subject, and reverted to the count's having spirited away the young Orazio, in terms which now fully evinced how much he had been surprised and perplexed by that event. To offer any advice in so strange and inexplicable an affair, I could not attempt; for I knew not in what light to consider the countess's conduct, in not having sent to know the marchese's pleasure respecting the infant daughter of her friend, before she ventured to make it the companion of her journey. That the countess really meant to proceed to Tuscany, neither the marchese nor myself could believe. We thought it was infinitely more probable that she was gone to join her husband in some foreign land; and at length concluded our consultation by imputing the singular behaviour of the Count and Countess di Mirandini, respecting the children of their ruined friends, to the sincere and indelible regard that had mutually subsisted between them, and which had now induced the former to form the generous resolution of adopting and cherishing the orphaned offspring of the latter.

"But while the Marchese di Rovenza feelingly acknowledged that this seemed perfectly consistent with the noble and disinterested friendship of which the Mi-

randinis had proved themselves capable, he could not refrain from expressing himself both hurt and offended at having been thus strangely deprived of the power of providing for those dear children, of whose inheritance he was, by the melancholy fate of their parents, the sole, but reluctant possessor. The unfeigned concern which this reflection gave to the marchese was now fully evident in his pale and haggard countenance; and I endeavoured to console him by suggesting the probability that at some future period he might have an opportunity of fulfilling his benevolent wishes towards the unfortunate offspring of his cousin. Surely, my words were at that moment prophetic; for do I not now behold the son of the brave, lamented Udina received with almost paternal kindness by the grateful Rovenza? My well-timed suggestions appeared to reconcile the marchese to an event which could not reasonably form a subject for regret.

"Those hapless children, doomed to the cruel fate of proscribed aliens, could not have been educated under his own immediate inspection: therefore, circumstanced as they were, nothing more fortunate could have occurred for them than to have obtained the protecting care and affections of the amiable Mirandinis, who had so well evinced the most generous and exalted friendship for their parents. While, however, these considerations tended to tran-

quillise in some measure the mind of the Marchese di Rovenza respecting the singular loss of the infants, he yet still suffered the most acute anguish of heart for the dreadful situations of Costanza and Veronica. The trial of the former, conducted with all the awful mystery which usually distinguished the tribunal of the state inquisition, was not then concluded; and we were then awaiting, in fearful, trembling expectation, the result, which, however, we dared not indulge the faintest hope or expectation of finding less terrible than our worst apprehensions foreboded. At the expiration of three days after the departure of the Countess di Mirandini, the destiny of Costanza was decided. He was pronounced guilty of all the charges exhibited against him. In vain he declared his innocence, and pointed out to his judges, as an undeniable proof of his integrity, the impossibility of producing a single accomplice as connected with him in the conspiracy in which it was pretended he had been engaged. This very circumstance served only to contribute to his ruin, and amid the dreadful tortures inflicted upon him to force him to a confession of the names of his associates, he is said to have expired—and was thus saved from the ignominious exposure of the public execution to which he would have been sentenced."

The pallid lips of the Signora della Albina now ceased to move. Dreadful recol-

lections had entirely overcome her power of utterance. Cecilia felt the sickly chill of freezing horror creep slowly through her veins, as imagination recoiled from the terrific picture that fancy presented of Udina's sufferings. Her death-pale cheek, and gaze of mingled woe and terror, recalled the signora from yielding too much to her own feelings, and she once more exerted herself to proceed in the continuation of the sad story, in order to prevent the mind of the young Cecilia being too deeply afflicted by the images of horror with which it was evidently overwhelmed.

"The death of Costanza was soon known to the Marchese and Marchesa di Rovenza. Need I say how much secret grief and distraction the event occasioned them to experience. The horrible manner in which he had died almost deprived his friends of the small share of consolation they might have derived from the idea that he had at least escaped the disgrace and degradation of a public exhibition in the hour of death.

"The awful sentence pronounced on Costanza di Udina confirmed the confiscation of his immense property, and, as Rovenza had justly anticipated, his name was declared extinct, and his descendants doomed to perpetual banishment. The good and generous Mirandini was also sentenced to banishment, as a subject of the states of Venice, and deprived of all his Venetian estates, for having held so

friendly and secret a correspondence with one who was considered as a traitor.

" When the excess of the deep affliction, which the certainty of Costanza's death occasioned us, was rather subsided, our whole cares and attentions were, with increased fervor and anxiety bestowed upon Veronica, whose deranged state became daily more confirmed; yet her madness was so soft, so touching, and pathetic, that no rough measures were essential in her case. She would sit for hours at the wide latticed casement of the dressing-room, silent and inanimate, or, while her unconscious fingers wildly struck the chords of the lute, breathe forth the most heart-thrilling strains; but of all those sad and tender airs which she sung with mournful and frenzied sweetness, she most frequently repeated that which you, my dear Cecilia, gave with such exquisite skill and power, on the evening when I first heard you sing in the pallazo di Rovenza in Venice.—I believe I need scarcely call to your remembrance the effect which it then produced upon the mind of the Marchese di Rovenza, whose vivid recollection of poor Veronica was then so alarmingly evinced by his fainting on seeing and hearing you at a moment when you so much resembled, both in person and voice, the beloved, lamented unfortunate, whom to this hour he deplores in silent grief."

" It was then to the hapless Lady Vero-

nica that the mysterious words uttered at that time by the marchese alluded?" said Cecilia, timidly interrupting the signora.

"Alas, yes," she replied.—"After the decease of his cousin, the marchese devoted himself wholly to the task of assisting his lady and myself in our efforts to recall the lost sensibility of Veronica, and with us, he has spent hours every day in the apartment of the lovely maniac, who, usually unconscious and unmindful of our presence, attended not to any of the means we employed to awaken her mind from the strange and mournful state of abstraction into which she had been plunged by her heavy misfortunes. Music appeared only to produce the effect of fixing her malady more deeply, yet no one had courage to deprive her of a solace to which she became daily more devoted.—Alas! who could have foreseen that this indulgence could have been productive of so frightful a result as that which at length attended it.—For nearly two months Rovenza was the constant and unwearied observer of this beautiful insane; and, when the first agony of his feelings had subsided, was perceived to listen with entranced attention to the wildly plaintive air she sung continually; but most particularly did he seem to dwell, with silent emotions of grief or rapture, on the melodious tones in which she warbled the affecting adagio to which I have just alluded. Several times the marchese had betrayed extraordinary

agitation while Veronica had sung that strain; but one evening, just when she had ceased, he displayed such singular symptoms of commencing derangement of mind, as terrified the marchesa and myself beyond expression. To our utter dismay, we soon learnt from the physicians that were instantly summoned, that unless the marchese could be prevented visiting the apartments of Veronica so frequently as he had been accustomed of late to do, we might reasonably apprehend that a compleat derangement of intellect would ensue, his mind being too weak to resist the influence of that species of sympathy which the constant sight of her excited. Every possible precaution was now of course resorted to to keep the marchese from seeing Veronica; but he would not always be restrained, and it is probable that he would have soon been as fully insane as herself, had not death released her from her sufferings, and saved him from the further contemplation of so dangerously an interesting object.—Alas! the poor Veronica was one morning found dead in her bed---the pillow on which her lovely head reclined was stained with blood, and one of her temples was much bruised and wounded.---Appearances led every one in the villa to imagine she had been murdered, but notwithstanding every possible investigation of the affair, this could not be positively proved, although one of the nurses who attended her, and slept in

the anti-room, had confessed that she once thought during the night that she had heard a man's voice in the chamber where the hapless maniac lay; but that, supposing her imagination must have deceived her, the woman again yielded to the influence of sleep.

"The very first hint of Veronica's death threw the marchese into the most violent frenzy-fit, and---" The signora hesitated a moment---"it was now discovered from his wild expressions that he had unfortunately imbibed an indelible and secret passion for that lovely victim of misfortune, by the imprudent daily contemplation of her beauteous form and features, which certainly exhibited, amid all the disadvantages of insanity, the most perfect loveliness. The death of Veronica could now scarcely be lamented: her own mournful state, and the dreadful circumstance of the marchese's having conceived for her those sentiments of affection which both reason and religion justly condemned, reconciled the amiable and sorrowing Helena to the loss of that beloved sister, whose days, however, had recently been past in that state of torpid melancholy which might almost be termed a living death.

"After the interment of the remains of Veronica, the marchesa would have devoted every hour to the attendance of her lord, who was for several weeks confined to his apartment by grief, and those temporary flights of delirium, to which

alas he still at intervals is subject; but he would scarcely endure her presence even for a moment during his illness; and his nearly incessant ravings, continually mingled with the name of Veronica, soon compelled his lovely wife to forbear her visits to his apartment. The agony of affliction which the Marchesa di Rovenza at this period suffered was almost more than her delicate frame could support. The idea that her husband cherished a passion for her deceased sister filled her mind with the utmost horror and grief; and she at length determined to separate from him, and retire into a convent as soon as he should be so far recovered as to be capable of being conversed with on the subject, and of granting the requisite permission for her to embrace the monastic life. When, however, the marchese regained some portion of reason and health, and his lady availed herself of the earliest opportunity of requesting his assent to her plan, he listened to her arguments with impatience and displeasure, and believing that the involuntary sentiments which he had entertained for Veronica, now that the latter was no more, could form no reasonable plea for separation between himself and the marchesa, he peremptorily forbade her indulging any further ideas of parting from him, as he could never be prevailed upon to yield his consent to a measure so unnecessary, and which must appear so extraordinary in the eyes of the

world. The marchese then represented how much their children might be injured by such singular proceedings on the part of their mother; and this consideration at length induced the marchesa to recede from her purpose. From this period, the Marchese di Rovenza was most sedulously attentive and respectful to Helena, but never assumed the least appearance of affectionate tenderness in his manner. In a short time after his recovery he set out on a course of travel, change of scene being advised by his physicians as absolutely essential for the perfect re-establishment of his health. He was absent nearly two years, and during this space I resided with the marchesa on a beautiful estate she possesses in the Vicentino. In this charming retreat, at a distance from the scene of her sorrows, and devoted to the care of her children, Helena began to imbibe the salutary balm of resignation to the will of heaven, and seeking for consolation for past irremediable misfortunes in religion only, soon obtained the sweet reward of tranquil piety. The return of the marchese, however, brought her new afflictions. His tour seemed indeed to have contributed considerably to the restoration of his health; but he had acquired a peevish haughtiness of address, and a mode of thinking equally singular and obstinate. The latter he soon evinced by the avowal of an intention to remove his children from the superintending care

of their affectionate mother, and to place them under the direction of strangers at a distance from home.

"Vain were the remonstrances, the tears, the entreaties of Helena to induce him to alter this cruel design. The marchese persisted in his extraordinary plan—a plan which has proved of the most disadvantageous nature both to Leonardo and Ottavania. Thus deprived of even the sight of her children, the marchesa relapsed into the deepest melancholy; and as her repressed spirits were not likely to be elevated by the unvarying, but cold respect and politeness with which her lord now behaved to her, she continued to pine in secret over her sorrows, while to the world she wore the semblance of placid resignation and content. A series of years passed on thus, unmarked by any particular event. No intelligence respecting the Mirandinis' place of residence had yet been received by the Marchese di Rovenza, except a whispered report that they had flown for refuge to Russia, and had sold off their Tuscan estates. As to what exact spot of that vast empire they had chosen to reside in, nothing certain could be discovered, and therefore the fate of the young orphans of Udina remained utterly unknown to us, till the recent appearance of Orazio evinced that one of them at least is in existence." Once more the signora paused: a deep and agitated sigh, uttered in a suppressed tone by Cecilia, had inter-

rupted the former, and drew her full attention on the amiable girl, who, on perceiving the alarmed and enquiring look with which the signora now examined her expressive countenance, tremulously said, "Ah, madam!—you believe that but one of the hapless children of the ruined, sacrificed Udina still exists;—and yet the painful narrative that you have been reciting is calculated to create the most mysterious conjectures and fears. An irresistible intuition seems to whisper to my heart that I was that unfortunate infant, that you beheld in the Villa di Mirandini, and that she whom I have tenderly loved and revered as a mother, is no other than that generous countess, who, by her exalted friendship for my parents, was compelled to follow the fortunes of an exiled husband far from her country and friends—Ah, yes! It must be so, every recollection seems to confirm my suspicions; the tender pity—the agitation with which the Signora di Berlotti received Orazio; the injunction to call this young man brother; the friendship which my amiable benefactress avowed to have once borne Veronica di Udina—all convinces me that I am that hapless orphan, and that Orazio is indeed my brother."

Exhausted by the excess of her feelings, Cecilia sunk nearly senseless on the sofa, while the signora, confounded by the rapidity of her exclamations and assertions, had neither power to interrupt her while

speaking, nor assist her when evidently on the point of fainting.

In a few minutes, however, Cecilia appeared to recover, and her audible and heartfelt sighs soon evinced that the idea of being a daughter of the once illustrious house of Udina, afforded her only the most painful and melancholy emotions. No tears fell from beneath her heavy eyelids, and the hectic flush, which glowed and faded alternately on her cheek, spoke most forcibly the agony of her feelings.

Deeply affected, but in some measure restored to apparent composure, the Signora della Albina took the trembling hand of Cecilia in her own, and in a voice of consolatory earnestness ejaculated—

"Cecilia, my amiable young friend, why have you suffered your mind to be thus impressed with ideas, the improbability of which must be so apparent to you on the least exertion of your reason? Were the Signora di Berlotti really no other than the Countess di Mirandini, where would have been the necessity for her burying herself in obscurity, and what enemy could she have who could have any inducement to drag her from her home in the manner in which the person whom you mention as the Count de Weilburgh has done? But to convince you at once of your error in this respect, I now inform you that the revered friend who reared Orazio in the deep solitudes of the Alps was the Count di Mirandini, and that it is now perfectly

well ascertained that both his lady, her female attendant, and a man servant, with the nurse and the infant daughter of Udina, were drowned in crossing the river Secchia, in their circuitous journey through the Milanese, from the Venetian territories into Switzerland. But one of the male attendants, who had been entrusted with the secret of the exact place whither the countess was hastening to meet her husband, after having but too well ascertained the truth of the lamentable event, proceeded with all possible speed to bear the mournful tidings to his lord, who no sooner heard the fate of his lady than, in a fit of despondence, he hastily formed the design of secluding himself from the world in the bosom of the Alps; and having, by a private agent, disposed of his property in Tuscany, retired with the young Orazio, now his adopted son, to the ruins of a lonely tower situated in the most impenetrable recess of Mount St. Gothard; and here he remained till his death, which occurred, as you have already been informed, but a few days prior to Orazio's flight from that wild retreat and residence of his youth. Thus you may perceive the utter fallacy of your present suspicions. Indeed there are several other circumstances that render the improbability of the Signora di Berlotti's being the Countess di Mirandini sufficiently apparent. Even the time which you have often mentioned as that on which the signora, your mother, first fixed her

residence in the cottage on the borders of the Lake Maggiore, may assure you of the error into which your imagination has just hurried you. It is, you have said, but twelve years since the signora first inhabited the cottage; but it is above sixteen years since the Countess di Mirandini met her death in the precipitate journey which she took to join her unfortunate lord in Switzerland. Therefore banish from your mind these strange surmises, my dear child; for be assured they have no proper foundation."

Cecilia, who had listened to the representations of the signora with the most anxious attention, could not but feel in some measure convinced that she had indeed formed very erroneous conjectures; yet the agitation that still pervaded her frame, left her almost powerless to confess that her ideas on the subject had undergone a change. A flood of tears soon, however, gave relief to her oppressed bosom, and she gratefully acknowledged her perfect sensibility of that consideration and kindness which had induced the Signora della Albina to endeavour to convince her of her error. Cecilia then expressed somewhat of the anxious and trembling impatience which she experienced, to hear from Orazio some clearer particulars relative to the situation of her mother; but did not say much on the subject, lest she should inadvertently betray a hint of the request of which the Contessa di Luzzana had

been the bearer, for a secret interview with that mysterious young man.

The Signora della Albina now perceiving that her young auditor had regained a small share of composure, proposed once more to resume the painful narrative she had been relating; and the amiable Cecilia instantly endeavoured to check all remains of her perturbation, in order to pay the signora the respect of proper attention to the sad history she condescended to detail.

"Having now, my dear Cecilia, acquainted you with the melancholy and lamentable events which led to the ruin of the once highly esteemed and respected family of Udina, it remains for me to inform you of some circumstances which have doubtless rendered some parts of the marchesa's conduct so singular and mysterious in your opinion. I allude to the reserve which you have certainly observed that lady to assume towards her lord; and the occasion of which is, however, so easily explained. You know, I believe, that in consequence of Orazio's generous protector, Mirandini's having providentially obtained some proofs of the innocence of the Count di Udina, that generous friend wrote to the Count Ferbonino, and discovered to that nobleman his own situation, and that of the young Orazio, for whom he earnestly solicited that support and protection so essential to the youth in his attempts to vindicate his father's memory, and to establish his own just claims to those

titles and that rank of which the erroneous decree of the deceived state had deprived Udina and his offspring. How readily the venerable Count Ferbonino evinced the generous resolution of immediately serving the son of Costanza you already are informed. His visit, in the disguise of a pilgrim, at your cottage, purposely to see Orazio, and implore your mother's temporary countenance of the youth, while he should endeavour to procure for him a commission in that army into which he so ardently desired to enter, best speaks the lively interest which the count instantly felt in the concerns of Orazio; and while the latter remained a resident at the priory of San Ambrose, and a constant visitor at the secluded habitation of the Signora di Berlotti, his estimable new friend Ferbonino hastened to employ himself in the most effectual methods of advancing the interests of his *elevé*. The commission was easily procured; but the Count Ferbonino felt that it was most essentially requisite that the young man should be received in such society as would render his first introduction to the world impressive and serviceable to his plans. The proofs of Costanza di Udina's innocence, although sufficiently convincing to the mind of friendship, the count soon found would be of little avail, unless he could discover the retreat of a man whose evidence was the only means of perfectly establishing the truth of the documents already in the pos-

session of Orazio. This was a work which would require some time, although there existed a tolerable clue where to find this important witness.

"In this interim, therefore, the Count Ferbonino justly imagined that Orazio could not observe too much caution and secrecy; and, in consequence of the prudent resolves of his venerable friend, it was determined that he should bear the fictitious name of Locendro, and pass for a young native of Switzerland, till the fortunate moment when he should be at liberty to reveal himself with honour should arrive. This affair was thus arranged between the Count Ferbonino and the venerable Bishop of Verona, his most intimate and valued friend, and who undertook to procure a favorable reception for Orazio in fashionable society, by recommending him most particularly to the notice of the amiable Contessa di Luzzana, his niece, to whose parties he was introduced by the recommendation of Count Ferbonino, who immediately afterwards set off on a distant tour to discover the man whose seizure is of so much consequence in the measures which are now pending for the appeal to be made in behalf of Orazio to the state. As to what occurrence induced this singular young man to so abruptly leave the Lago Maggiore I am entirely ignorant, and can only refer you to himself for an explanation of that event. But to proceed to

relate in what manner the Marchesa di Rovenza first became informed of the claims which Orazio possesses to her affection and friendship, I must inform you that she was made acquainted with his history through the medium of an anonymous letter, the style of which was as extraordinary as the intelligence which it conveyed was astonishing and interesting. Who the writer is cannot positively be determined; but there is reason to believe that this most impressive epistle is the production of the Bishop of Verona, who, although one of the most benevolent of men, is extremely eccentric in his manners. After reverting in the most forcible terms to the affection which subsisted between the marchesa and her unfortunate sister, the writer of this singular letter mentions his knowledge of that circumstance as forming his motive for his addressing her; and then, without any further preface, relates the little history of Orazio, and recommends him to the especial notice of his aunt; at the same time most strenuously advises that the strictest secrecy respecting the youth should be observed towards the Marchese di Rovenza, till such time should arrive when Orazio could convince him beyond all doubt that he was really the son of the lamented Costanza di Udina.

"The marchese," continued this extraordinary writer, "is indeed of a generous and humane disposition: his affection for Costanza could never be doubted; but

time may have considerably ameliorated his grief for the fate of that friend; and the present interest of his own son Leonardo may possibly render him reluctant to assist the claims of one of whose identity he might imagine himself authorised to doubt, unless convinced by the most undeniable proofs." Several similar arguments were offered to induce the marchesa to adopt this system of reserve towards her lord; and at length they succeeded in determining her to follow advice which she at the time imagined to be rather reasonable, and which could be attended with no ill consequences, as she was only enjoined to silence till the young Udina could bring forward undeniable proofs of his identity without too early revealing himself.

"I think it is wholly unnecessary to describe with what mingled emotions of amazement, joy, grief, and fear, the marchesa received the information which the letter contained; surprise and joy at finding that at least one of the children of her beloved, lamented sister still lived, and possessed the probable means of recovering all the former lustre of his noble house; and sorrow and apprehension lest the marchese, interested for their only children, should no longer be inclined to receive the offspring of Udina, when he should understand that the young man might soon be in a situation to reclaim all those vast possessions which the supposed crimes of his father had caused to revert to Rovenza.

These fears were natural; but that the marchesa did her lord injustice, is fully evinced in the reception he gives to Orazio, the remembrance of whose lovely mother still occupies his heart with sensations equally energetic and irresistible. It was the observance of the advice of this anonymous friend that gave to the conduct of the marchesa so extraordinary a colour. She received the letter but a few days previous to your arrival at the Pallazo di Rovenza with the marchese. You will judge what must have been her emotions when the marchese, in relating to her the singular manner in which he became your protector, mentioned the mysterious circumstance of Orazio's admittance at the cottage of your mother. The marchesa instantly understood who the young man was from the history she had received but a few days before, and had the utmost difficulty to conceal her agitation from the observation of the marchese, who did not appear to entertain the least suspicion of the truth. With increased impatience and anxiety she now looked forward to the moment when she should behold her long-lost nephew; and with joy she received a second letter from her anonymous correspondent, preparing her to see him speedily, under the assumed name of Locendro, at the Villa di Luzzana. It was the fervent wish she felt to avail herself of the earliest opportunity of seeing Orazio that occasioned her to hasten the departure of her

family from Venice to the Villa di Rovenza; but it was not, however, till the night of your accompanying her to the Villa di Luzzana that she met Orazio. He had, indeed, been there several evenings preceding; but the indisposition of the marchese prevented her paying an immediate visit to her friend the contèssa. The Signora Ottavania, however, who, with the Signoras Bellinzetto, had visited at the villa, unaccompanied by her mother, and attended by Leonardo, had already seen the supposed young Swiss, of whom, on her return, she spoke in such terms as increased the impatient anxiety of the marchesa to behold him. She suffered also no small share of apprehension and uneasiness at the idea of your meeting Orazio, as it was certain that you would not fail to instantly recognise him as the mysterious young man received by the Signora di Berlotti with so much friendly urbanity. To obviate the probably dangerous result which your astonishment on meeting him in such society, and under another name, might occasion, the marchesa, however, saw no other means than that of preparing you for the encounter, by revealing to you who he really was—a step which she could not endure the idea of taking, as she dreaded to entrust to your keeping a secret of so much importance; not that she doubted your discretion, but she feared lest the amiable ingenuousness of your mind might render you less cautious and

guarded than you would be required to be by the knowledge of such an affair.

"To suffer you, therefore, to meet Orazio wholly unprepared, was now the only alternative; and this the marchesa at length resolved to do, trusting to her own care and prudence for the means of preventing your using any expressions which might throw suspicion on the young man; and this she imagined would prove no very difficult task, as your extreme anxiety to obtain some information respecting your mother would rather incline you to observe silence as to those occurrences relating to Orazio, and which your mentioning could be of no service to yourself. That the marchesa acted with discretion in this affair I will not say; for certainly it would have been better to have prepared you for such a meeting. The result, however, was less disagreeable than my friend expected; and your prudence, in at length agreeing to be silent respecting your former knowledge of Orazio, gave some relief to her mind when she found that he had so precipitately quitted the villa.

"The occasion of this abrupt departure was fully explained to the marchesa, when, on the following morning, you repeated to her the conversation which had taken place in your interview with Orazio. That this ardently-minded young man had so suddenly departed in the full intent of making an attempt to gain some account of the situation of the Signora di Berlotti, and

that he would seek the desired information from Angelo Guicciardini, the marchesa justly conjectured, even while she trembled with grief and dismay at the recollection that the expressions which Orazio had made use of to you, fully evinced that he still held some connexion with that robber, and must be well acquainted with his usual haunts. His precipitate retreat from the villa had deprived her of any opportunity of then making herself known to him, and the sickly impatience of her heart to behold him once more, to declare herself, and require some explanation of the cause of his still continuing his intercourse with Angelo Guicciardini, became almost insupportable. In this state of anxious incertitude the marchesa most carefully re-perused the anonymous letter she had received. That letter, however, although it mentioned Orazio's short stay at your cottage, and his surprise at Angelo Guicciardini's promising his protection to yourself, intimated that the robber had never informed him what were his motives for declaring an intention of serving you. But this reference to the Signora di Berlotti and yourself was so short, and so carelessly made, that it afforded no information as to the real name or rank of the Signora di Berlotti; nor do I indeed imagine that the writer of this epistle knew any thing more on the subject than, perhaps, what the Count Ferbonino might have related respecting the short stay of

Orazio at the cottage. It is, however, sufficiently evident that Angelo Guicciardini is no stranger to the history of your mother. That the Signora di Berlotti was once well acquainted with the hapless Veronica, I think, there can be no doubt; but how this acquaintance commenced, it is impossible to decide. The friendship which certainly subsisted between them might have originated in their both having been boarders in the same convent; but among the many young females of rank, some of whom were probably foreigners, it is not easy to recollect what names Veronica may have accidentally mentioned with esteem. Your mother's reception of Orazio, the visit of the Count Ferbonino, and the signora's recognition of the jewels presented to you, are certainly convincing proofs that the unfortunate Countess di Udina was not unknown to her; but that the Signora di Berlotti is the Countess di Mirandini is totally improbable. As to the jewels, I perfectly coincide with the opinion which the Marchesa di Rovenza once avowed to you on that subject; that is, I believe they were presented to you by the Count Ferbonino, in compliance with the express wishes of Orazio, who dared not make the gift himself, and yet desired you to possess these jewels, which had certainly been once his hapless mother's, as he conceived you to be so truly amiable, and the daughter of the lamented Countess di Udina's friend." The signora now ceased

to speak. Her representations undoubtedly made a deep impression on the mind of Cecilia, yet still that amiable girl felt a degree of involuntary doubt and anxiety arise in her heart; but as she had no arguments to offer in opposition to the assertions of her friend, she remained silent, and the signora believed her perfectly satisfied.

The signora then proceeded to advise her to see Orazio in the presence of the marchesa alone on the very first opportunity; and Cecilia experienced too much eagerness to do so, not to declare herself resolved to speak to him on the subject as speedily as circumstances would permit. The amiable girl now expressed all the grateful thanks she owed to the Signora della Albina for the long and painful task she had undertaken, in relating the history of the Udina family; and although she wished to make a few more enquiries of that lady, yet she forbore to do so as she perceived the signora so much exhausted by the exertion she had already made for her gratification. Besides, the morning was now rather advanced, and she well knew that a short repose was essentially requisite to restore the languid spirits of the signora, who now mentioned an intention of retiring to her own apartment for a few hours. The amiable girl now insisted on attending the signora to her room, and then returned to her own chamber to indulge in reflection on the sad tale

to which she had listened with so much emotion, and which had given rise to so many interesting conjectures in her mind—conjectures which had for their object that dear parent whose idea was ever present to her afflicted heart, and was now mingled with the image of Orazio.

CHAP. XXII.

Cecilia di Berlotti and the Signora della Albina were not, however, the only individuals in the villa who passed the night without visiting their couches. The Marchese di Rovenza, kept awake by his fears for the life of his son, found small inclination to press a sleepless pillow, and, in a state of restless perturbation, wandered alternately from his son's apartment to his own during the night; and as soon as the first faint gleam of the early dawn was visible, he himself proceeded to the chamber which Orazio occupied; and after an apology for his strange intrusion, requested he would arise and meet him in a short time in the library.

Such an extraordinary visit, and such an ill-timed request, extremely surprised the youth; but instantly attributing this singular conduct of the marchese's to the disturbed state of his intellects, Orazio felt himself far more grieved than offended; and conceiving it to be a duty to yield

an immediate obedience to the commands of a relative so fully entitled to his gratitude and respect, he soon presented himself in the library.

He found the marchese sitting near a table, on which he leaned his arm in an attitude of deep reflection, and at the first moment seemingly insensible of his approach, till the sound of his voice caused him to start from his position.

Lights were still burning on the table; and one of the window curtains being drawn aside, the pale gleam of the opening morn was fully admitted, and formed a contrasting light, which gave to the complexion and features of the marchese a hue and expression so singular and death-like, that the young man involuntarily recoiled a few paces as the former suddenly raised his head, and directed his looks towards him. Rovenza did not appear to have noticed the gesture of Orazio, but with a thoughtful air gently put the lights further aside; and, leaving his own face and form partly in the shade, threw a strong glare on the animated countenance of his nephew, whose speaking features, formed by the hand of nature to the perfection of manly beauty, the marchese now contemplated for a few minutes in silent scrutiny, and did not appear, as in their first interview, to find the investigation too painful for his feelings to permit him to make. Indeed it now seemed the moment for Orazio to shrink from the observant gaze of

him who, but a few hours back, had apparently wanted courage to fix his eyes on the youth whose resemblance to his dearest relative and friend recalled the most heartfelt and sorrowing images to his mind, and rent his soul with emotions of the most poignant affliction.

At length the deep glow of struggling feelings which crimsoned the cheek of Orazio as, with half-averted countenance, he silently submitted to this penetrative-observing glance, recalled the marchese to a sense of propriety; and now withdrawing his gaze, he said—

"If you resemble your lamented father as much in disposition as in your outward appearance, you will pardon the interruption I have given to your repose, and be assured that my extreme anxiety to hear your story from your own lips would alone have induced me to intrude upon your hours of rest."

Orazio now politely, and with sincerity, assured the marchese that he certainly could not feel any cause of regret in having so early left his pillow, if he could by any means contribute to the satisfaction of one so well entitled to command his actions.

The marchese looked highly gratified, but replied only by an approving inclination of his head; and, after a momentary pause, said—

"If I am rightly informed, the friend to whom you are indebted for the generously paternal protection of your earliest

and more mature years was the—was the good, the noble-minded Count di Mirandini, that sincere and disinterested friend of your lamented father, who for his sake hazarded and lost so much——"

Orazio was now almost too much agitated to be capable of replying. He bowed an assenting affirmative, and turned away his face to conceal the tear with which the keenest emotions of gratitude, affection, and sorrow, had dewed his manly cheek.

The marchese, in a lower and more hesitating tone, said:—"And to the loss of his lady—the death, I mean, of the Countess di Mirandini, we may partly attribute his having buried himself with you amid the most inaccessible retreats of the Alps."

"Even so, my lord," falteringly answered Orazio.

Another pause followed.

At length the marchese resumed—"But in what manner did the singular acquaintance between such a man as the Count di Mirandini and the robber Angelo Guicciardini take place?"

"Merely by accident, my lord," replied the young man. "The count, in one of his rambles from the lonely and half-demolished tower in which we lived secluded, was taken prisoner by several of Angelo's men, and carried to one of their secret haunts; but was soon released by Angelo himself, and reconducted to his

tower. The count had judiciously acquainted that extraordinary man with his story; and the moment Angelo heard he was unfortunate, he swore to protect and serve him. From this period our dwelling assumed a very different aspect. It was compleatly repaired; and every comfort and convenience which the power and ample means of Angelo could furnish were lavishly given: books, globes, musical instruments, implements for drawing, various warlike weapons—in short, every thing which the robber could suppose necessary to forward my education was soon to be found in our isolated tower. When this change occurred, I was about six years of age; and from that time the Count di Mirandini was indefatigable in his endeavours to render me well instructed in every branch of knowledge, and in every accomplishment with which he was himself acquainted. My studies being varied by the occupation of a hunter, I thus passed my early days, frequently seeing Angelo Guicciardini at the tower, and in my rambles, but never suspecting the dreadful profession in which he was engaged. To this singular man I am indebted for much of my knowledge of military affairs; and, if his rough and seemingly ferocious manner at times alarmed me, I must also confess that the daring bravery, the wild generosity, and occasional humanity of his sentiments, have often inspired me with a degree of ardour

and courage which it is impossible to conceive or feel, unless listening to the flights of this extraordinary man."

The look which the marchese fixed on Orazio while thus he spoke of Guicciardini, was replete with an expression of mingled surprise and severity.

"You mention this man with a degree of fervor and animation, such as I regret to hear a decendant of the house of Udina use, when describing a common bandit!" exclaimed the marchese, when Orazio ceased. The young man, instantly rising from his seat, replied with manly, but respectful firmness, while a glow of wounded feeling was suffused over his whole countenance—"If I speak of Angelo Guicciardini with an enthusiasm offensive to the Marchese di Rovenza, it is because gratitude animates my heart, and gives force to my language; nor can the son of Costanza di Udina deem himself dishonoured by doing justice to the man, however unfortunate and faulty his pursuits, whose services were accepted by the virtuous di Mirandini, as the only means of procuring me the advantages of education—*Angelo Guicciardini* is indeed a *robber*, but the blood of the hapless and innocent has never stained his hand, nor has an act of inhumanity been ever sanctioned by his command; and while my inmost soul is agonized by the most poignant regret that such a man is lost to so-

ciety and honour, my lips shall ever do justice to his *good* qualities—qualities which would do honour to any station,—and which would reflect lustre on the most illustrious name, since they can even teach the heart of feeling sometimes to forget that this man *is* a robber! —— But, pardon me, my lord," he added, in a softer tone; "I am hurried away by the excess of my emotions.—Suffer me to retire till I am sufficiently composed to return to your presence. I perceive that the imprudent, but involuntary impetuosity of my manner, has both offended and agitated you I grieve at this result, yet I have no apology to offer for my precipitation, but that I have been early taught to express the spontaneous feelings of my heart without disguise, and without reserve."

Orazio, with a profound obeisance, now moved towards the door, but the marchese, who had indeed been beyond expression affected and displeased, with his warm eulogium of the robber Angelo, commanded him to remain, and the young man, with that air of modest deference which virtuous youth acquires under the consciousness of having offended those entitled by their age to respect and veneration, slowly returned.

"And who—who is this Angelo—of what country is he—is—and—and what motive could have induced him to embrace such a mode of life?" were the marchese's

first questions while his more than usual hesitation betrayed the still subsisting agitation and vexation of his mind.

" A German, I believe, of noble birth, and once as illustrious for his skill in arms, as for his exalted rank and princely possessions. Banished by political cabal from his country, and turned forth a plundered alien on the world, despair and rage drove him to the terrible resource he has embraced, and in the appellation of Angelo Guicciardini is lost all remembrance of that noble name by which he was once distinguished." " Certainly, this man cannot be the banished Count de Ellensburgh—that noble unfortunate, who twenty years since was pronounced a traitor to his emperor and his country!" exclaimed the marchese."

" On this point I cannot give you any positive satisfaction, my lord, as I have never been made acquainted with the real name of this brave, but mistaken man. It is highly probable, however, that your suspicions are perfectly just," replied Orazio, and the marchese apparently became confirmed in the idea that he had not erred in his conjectures, especially as Orazio had now expressed a coinciding opinion.

After a few more unimportant remarks on this subject, the marchese said, " Permit me now to make some enquiries respecting the Signora di Berlotti, as I have

secret, and most urgent motives for desiring to learn whatever particulars you can furnish me with relative to that lady.—Do you know who she really is, and can you inform me who the person is who has thus conveyed her away?"

"I regret that I can afford no information on this subject, further than that I believe she was known to my mother. Angelo Guicciardini is, however, I believe, perfectly well acquainted with her real history; but he never confided it to me." The marchese looked extremely perplexed and uneasy.

"I think," said he, "that—at least, from what you have told me relating to Angelo, that this Signora di Berlotti is some relation of the robber's—perhaps his wife. The solicitude he has affected for the young Cecilia betrays a deep and secret interest—an interest almost paternal—and—" Surprise, the extreme of agitation; and the quick and varying colour of the most heartfelt emotion, marked the expressive countenance of Orazio, while in tremulous accents, he exclaimed, "Good heaven!—It may indeed be so. Angelo assured me that this beautiful and amiable girl was nobly born; yet he refused to tell me her history. He is indefatigable in his effort to discover whither her hapless parent has been conveyed; and he has spoken of Cecilia as worthy the love of a prince."

"And doubtless intended to imply that

Cecilia was worthy the hand of Orazio di Udina!" interrupted the marchese, with an ironical sneer.

Orazio started, and seemed overwhelmed with confusion, while his uncle continued.

"Oh, simple, and unsuspecting credulous youth! Do you not *now* perceive the snare laid to entrap and undo you? This Angelo, probably long since possessed of some knowledge of your father's innocence, and foreseeing that you would one day have it in your power to claim your birth rights, has been influenced to ensnare your gratitude in order to draw you into an union with one who, I am now convinced, is his *daughter*—his child, perhaps, by some plebeian mother, or at best some careless female, who, if possessed of rank, has yet forfeited all claims to respect, by her connexion with a man, whom I no longer imagine of illustrious origin, but an artful, outcast bandit, who probably was but a mere adventurer even in his earlier days. Observe, young man, how ill qualified is impetuous youth to develope the deep-laid plans of experienced artifice and crafty design; and learn thence to check that wild enthusiasm which leads to erroneous opinions of those with whom we are not perfectly acquainted."

Orazio could not reply. Various reflections were fast crowding on his mind, all of which seemed to give some confirmation to the surmises of the Marchese di Rovenza, who, while he marked the climax

of the struggling feelings depicted on the expressive features of the youth, observed a silence imposed by the earnest wish of penetrating every emotion of his soul. At length Orazio, starting from his short and perturbed reverie, requested, in accents of impatient anxiety, to know whether Cecilia had ever given any particular detail of the history of the Signora di Berlotti and herself to the marchese or his lady.

"Oh no!" replied Rovenza, "this certainly beautiful, but, *I* fear, artful young woman has constantly assured us that she is entirely ignorant of her mother's real history, and either is, or at least *affects* to be, as compleatly unconscious of the cause of the mysteries in which she is involved, as we are ourselves. But we will dismiss a subject which ought not to be of importance to us, further than the dictates of humanity command. And now allow me to ask you of what nature are the proofs which you mean to bring forward, in order to save the memory of your father from further disgrace by the vindication of his innocence of the crimes for which he suffered, and to establish your own claims to the titles and estates of Udina?"

For this question, so abruptly made, and at a moment when his thoughts were occupied on so dissimilar a subject, Orazio was quite unprepared, but reluctant to let the marchese perceive how deep an interest he felt for Cecilia, and awakened to

other emotions by the mention of his father, and the plans he himself meditated to execute so speedily, the young man soon replied. "The proofs which I am enable to produce are of a nature which, I imagine, will give conviction to every unprejudiced mind, my lord, but alas! I find they will require the corroborating testimony of the confession of a man whose obscure rank and situation in life will render it a task of no small difficulty to discover his abode. I allude to Biondello di Balbo, the servant of the Signor Geronimo Ollivetto, for in fact that infamous slave employed an agent who executed the vile plot that brought on the utter destruction of my house."

"Biondello!—Biondello! then my—my first conjectures were *just*!" articulated the marchese, so excessively agitated by this confirmation of the well-grounded suspicion he had once entertained of this man, that he had scarcely power to add—"And in what manner, and by what means did this despicable menial effect his abhorrent purpose, my dear nephew?"

"With the exact particulars of this horrid transaction I am not acquainted, my lord," answered Orazio, in a tone of voice which evinced all the agony of his heart; "I will, however, endeavour to relate to you the occurrences which have so providentially furnished me with the few proofs I already possess of my murdered parent's innocence and honour." He paused to check the

overwhelming agitation which rendered his speech nearly unintelligible, and in a few minutes, with rather more composure continued—"A short time prior to the death of my ever to be lamented friend, the good and benevolent Mirandini, a straggling party, belonging to Angelo Guicciardini, found a man lying disperately wounded at no great distance from the cavern which was their most usual haunt. From the men under the command of Angelo, the wounded stranger, the wanderer, the poor pilgrim, or the humble traveller, never experienced either assault or injury; for such were the peculiar objects of his care, and this man was therefore carefully removed into the cave, and every assistance was given him which his deplorable situation required. The unhappy being was wounded beyond the reach of art to heal; and on the second day his dissolution was so visibly approaching, that he resigned all hope of recovering, and most earnestly and pathetically implored the attendance of a priest; a request which it was then in the power of Angelo to comply with, as one of the fathers of a small convent situated in a remote glen of the mountain, scrupled not, at the desire of this singular robber, to visit the penitent, and administer to him the rites which our holy church enjoins to the dying."

"How!" exclaimed, the marchese, now abruptly interrupting Orazio, "a priest—a man whose sacred profession

should have taught him to recoil with pious dread and horror from the banditti crew of Angelo Guicciardini, *voluntarily* enter the receptacle of such an outcast horde!—Impossible!" "Incredible as this may appear, it is most true, my lord, nor do I utter falsehood when I assert that this venerable father was remarkable for every virtue which should belong to a priest of that holy religion which, however its, *real tenets* are disguised by error and prejudice, is founded in *love*, and whose first precept is *charity*. But Angelo Guicciardini was not considered as a common plunderer, and those who ventured to confide in his word, ever found that he observed a promise with unshaken fidelity."

"Return to the subject of your little narrative, I entreat," again interrupted the marchese. "I am ampatient to hear the confessions of the stranger, whom this *pious* friar so courageously attended."

"When the father Salvati arrived, the stranger, who, from the order observed in the cave, believed himself to be in the hands of some hunters, entreated that several persons might remain to witness the confessions he was about to make, and this being complied with, he exerted all his efforts to give a clear and correct account of many monstrous villainies which he had committed, and avowed himself to have been for years an assassin in Venice. Among the many enormities he confessed,

the circumstance which he most particularly detailed, and, with the truest marks of contrition, lamented, was his having been engaged in a plan for the destruction of my father."

The manly voice of Orazio trembled; grief, horror and indignation choaked his utterance, while the wild, but fixed gaze of the marchese, spoke the deepest attention, amazement and expectation.

In tones broken and scarcely audible, the youth proceeded. "The account of the stranger, whose name was Velasquez Maretti, was brief but impressive. He declared that he had been hired by Biondello di Balbo, once a servant of the Signor Geronimo Ollivetto, but then discharged from his service, to place certain papers in a private cabinet in one of the apartments of the Pallazo di Udina, and that having succeeded in that business, he, a short time afterwards, received a second purse of sequins for assisting Biondello in the assassination of the Signor Ollivetto on the very night preceding the day fixed for the celebration of his nuptials with the beautiful Signora Veronica Loredana."

The marchese groaned aloud.

Orazio, in faltering accents, continued —"And this assassin—this miserable Velasquez, even *he* had a heart to feel how dreadful was the train of calamities which attended those horrible acts, and in dying accents swore, that could he have con-

ceived the miseries which resulted to the noble house of Udina from the crimes he had perpetrated at the instigation of Biondello, he would not have engaged in the affair, even for millions!"

"And what were the infamous Biondello's motives for engaging him at all in this business?"

"Alas! that wretch, influenced by the most diabolic malice which could enter the human breast, had no other motives for these deeds of blood and horror than revenge for the fancied injuries which the unfortunate Ollivetto had done him by discharging him from his service, and the refusal of the count, my grandfather, to receive him into his household."

The marchese uttered an exclamation expressive of surprise and incredulity, and then added: "This is, indeed, beyond my comprehension. I had well judged Biondello to be the criminal; but I had suspected one of the Ollivetto family as the instigator of this dark affair: for I know, beyond doubt, that his younger brother did not even feign a sorrow for the death of Geronimo; and while the signor his father, and his uncles, were making the utmost exertions to criminate your father, Lorenzo Ollivetto looked on with an apathy which led me to suppose him by no means guiltless in the business."

"You were in error then, my lord; for that fiend-like Biondello had repeatedly assured Velasquez that his sole motive was

personal revenge; and the manner in which he paid the assassin sufficiently evinced that he had no wealthy employer. A few sequins, and those chiefly hoarded coin, which this diabolical being declared to have been the saving of some years was the only recompense for thesedeeds of darkness, which produced the ruin of my house."

"Monstrous atrocity!" ejaculated the marchese: "but you have hopes; that is, you have some clue to enable you to discover this Biondello, if, indeed, he still lives?"

"I wish I could say I was so fortunate as to possess any certain information respecting the place of this wretch's abode, my lord; but unhappily that is not the case," replied Orazio.

The marchese looked disappointed and surprised, and said—

"But, surely, the assassin Velasquez must have given you some intelligence of that villainous Biondello, or wherefore is the Count Ferbonino so actively occupied by his attempts to find him? But pardon my impatient interruptions. Proceed in your relation of the confessions and death of Velasquez, by hearing which I shall be better enabled to judge of the prospect which you may have of finding that malicious ruffian Biondello."

"Angelo Guicciardini was himself present at the confession of Velasquez, and was so much shocked at this discovery of

the real causes of the ruin of my family, and so sensible of the directing hand of Providence in the development of the truth, that he ordered a written attestation of the affair to be drawn up, which was immediately afterwards signed by Velasquez, who confirmed the account by the most awful oaths; and declared that, if he was not mistaken, the horrible Biondello had been met by him in Milan not three months prior to the day on which he himself had been brought wounded to the cavern."

"And how long back is it since this penitent Velasquez was discovered by Angelo's men?"

"About five months since, my lord."

"And how was this man so desperately wounded?"

"He had attempted to rob and murder a pilgrim in one of the passes near the cavern, but received his own death from the hands of the pilgrim, whom he described as a man of athletic size, and who had, by a well exerted dexterity, wrested his stiletto from him; and, plunging it in the bosom of his assailant, fled."

"Velasquez is really dead then?"

"He died a few hours after he had made his confession."

The marchese shook his head with an air of chagrin. "That is unlucky," he said: "had this Velasquez lived, his evidence might have been of the most important service to your cause. The priest who

took the confession, however, I suppose, is still in being."

"He is still living I should hope," replied Orazio; "but he is now unfortunately absent on a pilgrimage to the shrine of St. James at Compostello."

"When did he set off? and at what time may his return be expected?"

"Not these two months, I apprehend, my lord. But if the Count Ferbonino succeeds in the efforts he is now so generously making for the discovery of Biondello, we may, I believe, commence our designs of laying the case befor the council on the return of the count."

"Why, yes, I think you may," replied the marchese, a glow of satisfaction giving a transient animation to his features. "I suppose," he continued, "that Angelo Guicciardini is also zealous in his attempts to favour your cause by the apprehension of Biondello?"

"I believe he has employed some agents for that purpose," replied Orazio; "but I imagine that he himself is fully occupied in endeavouring to discover the Signora di Berlotti, and to learn whither she has been conveyed by the person who had her carried off from her cottage."

"Then he knows who is the secret and mysterious enemy of the signora?" demanded the marchese eagerly.

"I cannot inform you, my lord."

"Excellent!" exclaimed Rovenza:

" this is another convincing proof of Angelo's art and management. This mother and daughter are certainly related to him; and he removes the signora out of the way to give an opportunity for the girl's being taken under the protection of those who could best introduce her to that society where she would be certain of encountering you."

Orazio thought this surmise equally silly and improbable, and did not therefore make any reply. The marchese resumed: " And I—even I, was so dazzled by the young Cecilia's exquisite accomplishments, that I suffered myself to indulge even to conviction the idea that she must have been nobly born. But if her mother is really of high birth, her too certain connexion with Angelo, whom I no longer doubt to be the father of this girl, must stamp both herself and her offspring with indelible infamy. I will not, however, cast this poor child, who, I believe, is yet innocent, on the mercy of the world; but I must soon remove her from the protection of the marchesa to a convent, where she may remain till reclaimed by her mother. Yet I do not mean to betray the absurdity I have been guilty of in my former ideas respecting her, by revealing either to my family or the world the real circumstances of our curious little *protegée*; and therefore I must request you to observe a strict silence as to what has just passed between us upon the subject. And now inform me what

occasioned your recent visit to Venice, my dear nephew?"

The marchese was obliged to repeat his question ere Orazio could collect his thoughts sufficiently to be able to reply. Utterly confounded by the declaration which the former had now made respecting Cecilia, he had been overwhelmed with confusion, anxiety, and surprise; and was scarcely sensible of what he said when he answered—

"I went to Venice to see Angelo Guicciardini, who, I knew, was there at the time."

"And did you see him?"

"I did, my lord."

"For what purpose did you seek to see him?"

"To inform him of the situation of the Signora Cecilia; and to learn, if possible, some intelligence of the Signora di Berlotti."

"But you were disappointed?"

"Not entirely, my lord. Angelo was already acquainted with the circumstance of Cecilia's being under the protection of the Marchesa di Rovenza; but he refused to give me any particulars of the history of these ladies; and merely assured me that, although the Signora di Berlotti was at present in the power of a dreadful foe, she would not long remain in so perilous a situation."

The marchese now fixed a penetrating glance on the face of Orazio, and seemed,

even by his looks, to doubt the sincerity of the youth; while, in a voice of earnest seriousness, he said—

"Do not speak to me with any degree of reserve, Orazio di Udina. Let not an affection, equally culpable and evident, influence you while speaking of this Signora di Berlotti. Who is her enemy?"

The manly cheek of Orazio was suffused with the crimson glow of conscious and almost indignant integrity, as, much agitated, he answered—

"The Marchese di Rovenza injures me most deeply by the supposition that I am capable of a despicable, mean evasion, which my soul abhors. Once more, my lord, I must repeat that I am ignorant of every thing relating to the Signora di Berlotti but that she was once known to the countess, my mother."

"That is no proof that she is *noble*. There were several *plebeians* in the convent in which the daughters of the Signora Bianca Loredana were educated; but certainly this lady must be known to the Count Ferbonino!"

"I believe not, my lord; or, if she is, he has thought proper to conceal the circumstances from my knowledge."

"Then, if she is not known to that nobleman, what other circumstances could induce him to present to the young Cecilia a casket of jewels of such value?"

"That casket of jewels formerly belonged to the countess, my mother," hesi-

tatingly replied Orazio; "and were delivered to the count by Angelo Guicciardini for the express purpose of their being presented to that young lady."

Gazing on Orazio with a fixed look of angry surprise, the marchese now demanded how those jewels came into the possession of the robber Angelo."

"The casket and its contents were accidentally carried away by the Count di Mirandini, who received them from his lady in a mistake on the night when he was so precipitately compelled to fly from his villa in the Paduano."

"And you permitted them to be given to persons with whose rank you were wholly unacquainted?" exclaimed Rovenza.

"Though uninformed of the history of the Signora di Berlotti, I then believed her to have been an early friend of my mother's, and doubted not that her concealed rank must be superior, ere the Count Ferbonino would have assented to offer the Signora Cecilia such a gift." Rovenza paced the room in much displeasure for a few minutes, and then abruptly pausing, said—

"I will argue no further on the subject of this signora's rank. Be that whatever it may, it is evident that there exists some strange mystery between her and the robber Angelo; nor can I doubt that Cecilia is the fruit of their connexion."

Disconcerted and mortified by this contemptuous mention of the signora and

Cecilia, Orazio, almost unconscious of what he uttered, repeated—

"Assuredly as those jewels were once the ornaments of my dear lamented parent, the Count Ferbonino's having offered them to the acceptance of Cecilia di Berlotti, evinces, beyond all doubt, that she is of a rank which entitles her to use such splendid gifts."

The looks of the marchese now spoke the most serious displeasure and dissatisfaction; and, in a tone of mingled anger and contempt, he begged to dismiss the subject for the present.

"You cannot prove that she is not Angelo's daughter; and it should be a matter of no consequence to us; Orazio, who or what these people are. The establishment of your claims, and the arrangements for your future plans in life, are the only concerns which now should engage your attention; and I should hope that a son of the illustrious house of Udina will not fail to reflect that he may form an alliance with any of the noblest families of Venice, when once restored to his birthrights, and freed from the stigma with which the supposed crimes of his father has branded the name of Udina."

There was something so harsh in this abrupt speech, that Orazio seemed to shrink back in involuntary disgust, and almost lost all sensibility of the good intentions of the speaker, in the painful emotion which his manner created.

The marchese, however, appeared to be too much occupied by the interest which he expressed on the subject of Orazio's future establishment to pay any attention to the feelings of the young man; and, after a slight pause, he continued his conversation by requesting to know Orazio's motives for having so abruptly quitted the Priory of San Ambrose, after his short intimacy at the cottage of the Signora di Berlotti.

"An unexpected summons from the Count Ferbonino was the occasion of my then precipitate departure, my lord," answered Orazio: "the count was then waiting for me at Milan." The marchese looked grave, but asked no further questions on that subject.

The entrance of a servant, who came to inform the marchese that the Signor Leonardo was awake, and most anxious to see him, put a period to this interview, the marchese immediately hastening to the apartment of his son, and Orazio to adjust his dress, preparatory to his meeting the family at breakfast.

CHAP. XXIII.

The marchese, on entering the chamber of Leonardo, had the satisfaction of finding him perfectly composed, and of learning from the surgeons in attendance that

his recovery might be speedily expected. To counterbalance the delight which this information gave him, he was assured that no conversation could be as yet permitted to take place between his son and himself, the invalid being still too weak for such an exertion.

Leonardo, however, appeared so anxious to exchange a few words with his father, that the medical gentlemen were compelled to grant him a short indulgence, and of which he availed himself for the purpose of importuning the marchese to set the Signor Faenza at liberty.

Extraordinary as this request appeared to the marchese, and reluctant as he felt to comply with it, yet the anxious impatience which Leonardo evinced on the subject, terrified the former into a most unwilling assent to a step which he justly thought to be both imprudent and dangerous.

The animated satisfaction which beamed from the eyes of Leonardo on obtaining this request, sufficiently proved how much he would have been affected by a disappointment; and while he thanked the marchese for his acquiescence in his wishes, he would have entered into an explanation of the motives that had influenced him to make such a request, had not his anxious parent positively declined continuing the conversation, lest any further emotion might prove detrimental to his health.

Leaving his son to the care of his various

attendants, the marchese now proceeded to the apartment where Faenza was confined, till the proper officers should arrive to whose custody he was to have been committed.

The signor received the marchese with a half sullen, half fearful look, which spoke all of guilt and apprehension; but when he understood that that nobleman was come to give him liberty, he expressed the utmost surprise and the most extravagant transports of joy, and made his acknowledgments for the singular lenity shewn towards him in terms equally animated and grateful; while he averred that nothing but the wildest flight of jealousy and impassioned love could have influenced him to the commission of the act of treachery which he now so sincerely regretted.

There appeared a degree of sincerity in the looks and manner of Faenza, which almost reconciled the marchese to the necessity his son had laid him under of setting the signor at liberty; and perhaps some recollections of Faenza's noble birth and splendid fortune contributed to make his professions of regret and sorrow, which he profusely uttered, rather well received by the marchese, who now permitted him to depart from the villa to the extreme vexation and disappointment of the domestics, who were the only persons that witnessed this transaction.

When Faenza had departed, the marchese returned to his library, and passed

half an hour in solitary reflection, previous to his joining the party assembled in the breakfast-room.

While the Marchese di Rovenza was thus mentally occupied, Orazio had found a most unexpected opportunity of obtaining a private interview with Cecilia. Attentive only to that propriety of appearance which is equally becoming in youth or age, he had soon adjusted his dress, and was descending to the breakfast-saloon, when in passing from the inner hall into the vestibule, he met Cecilia. Both blushed, both hesitated as they exchanged the usual salutations of the morning; but the look of anxious and earnest enquiry depicted on the features of the lovely girl, as for an instant she raised her timid glance to his face, induced him to entreat the favour of a few minutes private conversation; a request to which she bowed an immediate assent, and led the way into a small apartment seldom occupied by any of the family.

The filial affection and concern which filled the heart of Cecilia, immediately impelled her to entreat to be informed of what he had recently learned respecting the signora her mother.

Orazio briefly replied, that he had had an interview with Angelo Guicciardini, and that the latter would not be prevailed upon to give him any further information relative to the signora than that she would

soon be liberated from the power of her foes.

"And that letter, signor!---was it not written by my mother?"

With extreme emotion, Orazio replied, "To my unspeakable regret I must acknowledge that I could not induce Angelo to enter into even the slightest explanation on this subject."

Cecilia, who had never heard the name of Angelo Guicciardini without experiencing the most undefinable and contrary emotions, now turned away with a look which so impressively spoke the anguished feelings of her heart, that Orazio, whose mind was deeply agitated by the suggestions which the marchese had uttered respecting the probability of her being the daughter of the bandit, internally trembled as he observed this look of unfeigned terror, doubt and fear, which marked the countenance of the artless girl as she spoke of the robber, and his soul sunk as his fancy anticipated the shock which her delicate and innocent mind would receive, should it hereafter be proved that the dreaded Angelo was her father. The torturous concern which this idea gave to Orazio, rendered him nearly as much agitated as Cecilia herself appeared to be, and it caused him no slight effort to regain sufficient apparent composure to assure her that Guicciardini could not be prevailed upon to speak more clearly on

the subject, although he seemed to be perfectly well acquainted with the history of the Signora di Berlotti.

Astonishment, perplexity and apprehension, clouded the beautiful features of Cecilia, while in tremulous accents, she said, "So then this terrific man is really the friend of my beloved mother?"

"Angelo Guicciardini feels, I believe, no trifling interest in the concerns of the signora," was Orazio's reply, while the consciousness of his own internal feelings gave an air of confusion and embarrassment to his looks and manner, which Cecilia observed with equal pain and surprise.—Tears of heartfelt, suspensive dread and disappointment trembled in her dark eyes, as faintly she uttered,

"Then from you, signor, I may not hope for any further information relative to the situation of my dear unfortunate parent."

The expression of her countenance as she spoke was so sweetly sad, and timidly imploring, that Orazio could scarcely restrain the impulse which impelled him to throw himself at her feet, and vow to traverse the universe in order to obtain intelligence of that dear parent, whose uncertain fate occasioned this lovely girl so much affliction and misery. The respect, however, with which the modest elegance of her air and manner inspired him, enabled him to disguise the violence of his feelings, and, in faultering accents, he

spoke the regrets which his inability to satisfy the filial anxiety of her mind by a fuller account of the situation of the Signora di Berlotti occasioned him to experience.

Cecilia now arose. The excess of her disappointment and inquietude had become too oppressive not to be observed, and she would have withdrawn to conceal the anguish of her heart.

In a tone of voice which fully betrayed the keen agitation of his mind, Orazio now respectfully implored her to remain but a few moments longer.

"Ah, wherefore are you thus distressed, amiable Cecilia?" he exclaimed: "suffer me to inspire you with the just hope that the Signora di Berlotti cannot long be exposed to the unlawful oppression of her foes; for believe me, that although the character of Angelo Guicciardini is but too well calculated to excite in thy angelic mind sensations only of horror, doubt and apprehension, yet this man's word has never yet been broken, and, possessed of such means and resources as are at his command, his success in any undertaking of this nature can scarcely fail of being certain. Oh! do not then yield to the gloom of these despondent fears and doubts which oppress your spirits, when probably a short period only may elapse ere you receive the completion of your pious wishes—the reward of all your filial grief and tenderness."

The energy which animated the looks and voice of Orazio, as with persuasive earnestness he thus besought Cecilia to listen to the consolatory representations of hope, faintly revived the spirits of the lovely, afflicted object of his anxiety, even while his manner of speaking of the robber Angelo inspired her mind with new emotions of surprise and curiosity. No longer considering Orazio as the artful companion of Guicciardini, she could now only believe that gratitude dictated the very favourable sentiments which this young man entertained for one whose frightful mode of life, although perhaps not so criminally pursued as was generally the case, was yet sufficiently dreadful to make honour and virtue recoil from his idea. After a slight pause, during which she timidly ventured to glance on the expressive countenance of Orazio with a look of scrutiny, she said,

"The high opinion, signor, which you have derived, I presume to imagine, from your early and long knowledge of Angelo Guicciardini, is well calculated to incline me to place some dependence on the good intentions of this extraordinary man—but ignorant as I am of the motives which influence the robber Angelo to exert his dreadfully acquired power in behalf of my mother, it is not singular that I should feel a thousand doubts and terrors rack my heart. Entangled in a labyrinth of strange and inexplicable occurrences as I

have lately been, I know not what to hope or what to believe, lest error and disappointment should prove the result of hasty credulity. Yet I will now endeavour to trust that from you, whose noble birth I hope will be my best security for crediting your word, I have not received assurances merely founded in the benevolent, but mistaken wish of tranquilizing my mind, by flattering illusions which could not be realised."

A deep glow of wounded feeling and concern overspread the features of Orazio, while, with intense attention, he gazed on the half-averted eyes of Cecilia, in whose expression he imagined he discovered a doubt of his candour, and he now felt that the idea of being degraded in her opinion, was to him agony insupportable.

In that earnest and impressive tone which speaks all of ardent sincerity, he replied,

"I perceive that my connection with Angelo Guicciardini renders me still an object of suspicion—shall I add of contempt to the Signora Cecilia? Can I then again presume to assert the truth of what I have already advanced when she scarcely deigns to believe me capable of that ingenuousness, devoid of which I should be more despicable in my own eyes than in those of any other existing being, and—"

"You wrong me, signor," with impatient but modest anxiety, interrupted Cecilia.—"I do not doubt the veracity of

those assurances you have given me: I fear only that such a man as Angelo Guicciardini may not always be confided in. The kindnesses—the obligations which your early protector may have received from this extraordinary bandit, I apprehended might have induced you to think more leniently of him than perhaps he merits."

The agitation which Orazio now experienced was almost beyond endurance. How could he plead the cause of the robber Angelo, and not incur the fearful disgust of the pure and artless mind of Cecilia? How could he support the idea that this man was perhaps the father of this lovely, amiable being, and yet suffer her unconsciously to load that father's name with even more ignominy than his character really deserved; and yet how would he suggest to her keenly sensitive heart that to such a being she was too probably indebted for existence?

A deep sigh of mental anguish escaped his lips:---he turned away from the now alarmed and astonished girl, and paced the room with an air but too expressive of the disturbed state of his feelings.

The affrighted Cecilia arose from her seat, and in an attitude of suspensive expectation and involuntary terror, watched his quick and agitated steps. Suddenly he turned: the view of her beautiful form, half bending forward towards him, her look of amazem t and timid entreaty,

spoke to his heart; and while her whole appearance convulsed his soul with the most irresistible emotions of love, admiration and pity, he felt the agonising irritation of his mind subside into all the softer sympathies of affection and grief.

Under the impulse of these changing feelings, he approached the lovely maid, who now shrinking from the ardent tenderness of his half-fearful gaze, stood abashed, and yet unconscious of those sentiments which rendered her incapable of supporting his presence with composure.

The glow of modest timidity mantling on her polished cheek, the downcast eye, and retreating air of Cecilia, restored Orazio to recollection; and after a momentary struggle of contending emotions, his manner became less ardently expressive, while, in a tone of assumed calmness, he said,

"Will the amiable Cecilia di Berlotti suffer me to implore that she will endeavour to divest her mind of some share of those prejudices which, much I fear, have been instilled into her gentle bosom respecting Angelo Guicciardini, who, more unfortunate than criminal, is possessed of virtues that even the state of life, to which mistaken ideas have reduced him, cannot wholly obscure?"

The recent embarrassment which Cecilia had endured vanished at this address, and while she listened with increased surprise

to this eulogium on the robber Angelo, she yet averted her eyes, and involuntarily recoiled at the thought of believing him capable of any meritorious action.

Another moment of mutual and painful silence followed. At length she hesitatingly asked,

"Did the Signor Orazio never hear this eccentric man mention the signora my mother prior to his entering our cottage?"

"Never, believe me. But I had hoped that all those circumstances were already explained to the Signora Cecilia," he added.

"From whose information did you derive this opinion, signor?" enquired Cecilia.

"The Marchesa di Rovenza last night deigned to assure me that her amiable young *protegée* was perfectly informed of my real story," was Orazio's reply.

"Last night!" repeated Cecilia; "at what hour?"

"At the time when the Signora della Albina passed some hours in your apartment, relating to you, signora, a history equally sad and eventful."

Another exclamation of surprise fell from the lips of Cecilia, who now learned more fully that after the domestics and family had retired, the marchesa had passed half the night in conversation with her new-found nephew, and had made every possible, although unavailing en-

quiry, which the regard she professed to entertain for herself could suggest, respecting his knowledge of the Signora di Berlotti.

"Alas!" added Orazio, "I had nothing to offer to the excellent marchesa but my regrets that I could not afford her the required information."

"And yet you, signor, were received at the cottage of my mother with all those marks of interest and esteem, which her former knowledge of the Countess di Udina doubtless induced her to bestow upon the son of a beloved friend. Singular that my hapless parent should be so well informed as to your story, and that you should be so unacquainted with every thing relating to one who nominally called you son, and bade her daughter consider you as a brother!"

The emotion with which Cecilia had spoken again suggested to Orazio the distressing idea that she had regarded all he said with incredulity; but this was not the case: Cecilia's mind was now occupied by the singular surmise which had occurred to her when the Signora della Albina was narrating to her the Udina history; and improbable, as the signora had represented to her, as was the supposition of the Signora di Berlotti's being the Countess di Mirandini, still the distressed girl could not divest herself of the suspicions which had at first arisen in her mind on this subject; and now impelled by the un-

conquerable anxiety to be either convinced or undeceived on this point, she uttered those expressions which to Orazio's comprehension appeared only to imply doubts of himself. Again uneasy and confounded at her imagined want of dependence on his sincerity, he knew not in what manner to reply, till Cecilia, starting from a transient reverie, into which her anxious thoughts had for a moment plunged her, demanded whether the Countess di Mirandini was really dead.

With an earnest gaze of astonishment, Orazio assured her that that lady had been many years no more.

"You are well convinced of this, signor?"

"Most certain—for I had from infancy witnessed the grief of my protector for the loss of that most amiable of wives---that lamented and inestimable friend of my mother," answered Orazio.

"Ah, then whom can my beloved mother be?" unconsciously ejaculated Cecilia, with a sigh.

Orazio started as if electrified. "Heavens!" he exclaimed. "And could Cecilia really imagine that the Countess di Mirandini still lived in the Signora di Berlotti!---Ah! then whom could you suppose that you yourself are?"

"Thy sister," murmured the trembling girl, and had sunk overcome with her emotions on the arm of the couch, had not a voice, which sounded in her ears

like the knell of death, recalled her animation and horror most exquisite, for in hideous tones it pronounced, "Sister !---What !---Shall the spurious offspring of the robber Angelo Guicciardini claim kindred with the illustrious house of Udina !"--and bursting on the astonished sight of Cecilia and Orazio, advanced from a dark recess of the saloon the form of Ottavania di Rovenza, with a countenance pale from malignant rage, and eyes flashing the ireful glances of a fury.

"Offspring of the robber Angelo !" tremulously repeated the affrighted Cecilia, while, with a look of fearful expectation, she raised her eyes to Orazio, and added, "whom does she mean ?"

"She !---whom does she mean !---why who but the beggar cottager, the romantic heroine of the Lago Maggiore, the paragon of art, Cecilia di Berlotti, the daughter of the robber Angelo !" screamed, in harsh discordance, the malicious Ottavania, while the innocent, suffering Cecilia, starting in wild affliction and dismay, gazed for a moment on this cruel insulter : the paleness of death overspread her beauteous countenance; the mild radiance of her eyes became dimmed with horror, and with one feeble glance raised to that heaven where mercy dwells, she heaved a sigh that seemed to rend her heart, and was falling lifeless to the floor, when the extended arms of Orazio received and sup-

ported her lovely form, while the quick lightning of his expressive eye fell on the hateful countenance of Ottavania, as she retired, and told her all the indignation and disgust she had created in his heart.

CHAP. XXIV.

With eyes irresistibly rivetted on the fiend-like features of Ottavania, Orazio marked her receding steps, and unconsciously pressed the senseless form of Cecilia closer till she had disappeared ; and then, as if no longer fearing danger to the lovely innocent being, he released her from his supporting arms, and placing her on the couch, was hastening to the door to summon assistance, when the Marchese di Rovenza, followed by his unfeminine daughter, met him at the entrance.

Both hastily entered the room. The marchese looked the horror-stricken image of amazement and confusion, while Ottavania, haughtily pointing to Orazio, who had now again approached the sofa where his treasure was reclined, exclaimed,

" There !—Behold the impostor, who, daringly claiming the exalted titles of Udina, comes to rob you of your just possessions to raise a bandit's outcast offspring on the ruins of Rovenza's name."

She then rushed from the saloon, leaving

the marchese apparently stupified by her inhuman vehemence, and Orazio filled with such sentiments of horror and amazement, as nothing but the situation of Cecilia could have in any degree subdued. Not daring to quit the side of the still insensible object of his distracting cares, he once more raised her, and while with ineffectual tenderness he tremulously called on her name, and essayed to revive her, the marchese, recovering from the sudden shock he had just received, now seemed sensible of the state of his innocent *protegée*, and saying he would immediately send proper assistance to her aid, implored Orazio to remain near Cecilia, while he himself must follow his daughter, and prevent her publishing to her friends those disagreeable particulars which he perceived had occurred, but to which he was still a stranger.

With hasty steps the marchese flew towards the breakfast-room. Ottavania was not there: the Signora della Albina, the Count Carraci, and the Bellinzettos, were the only persons in the saloon. The purturbed looks of the marchese, as he glanced his eyes around, and fixed them on the Signora della Albina, with an expression implying his wish that she should accompany him from the apartment, were observed by all present, and by the signora in particular, who instantly arose, and followed him into the vestibule, where he briefly requested her to hasten to the room

where Cecilia was, as he could depend only on her prudence to prevent any publicity being given to a most unpleasant discovery which he feared had just taken place.

His manner of speaking, and the import of his words, were sufficiently alarming to the signora, who now flew to the apartment to which he had directed her, and entered it just as Orazio, in despair at the continuance of Cecilia's swoon, was loudly calling for that assistance which he feared to leave her in order to procure.

Prompt in action, although terrified and distressed beyond measure, the signora soon effected the recovery of Cecilia, who at length once more unclosed her sad eyes to weep in bitterness of soul the dreadful tidings which the malign lips of the ireful Ottavania had pronounced.

In vain were the representations, the consolatory suggestions which Orazio and the signora, who had been informed in a few words by him of the cause of Cecilia's grief and despair---in vain was every persuasive argument used to discredit, at least till conviction could be obtained, the cruel assertion which had been uttered merely to destroy her peace---and a dreadful and apparently intuitive conviction seemed already to have fixed on the mind of the hapless girl; and as the daughter of Angelo Guicciardini, she shrunk from consolation and from hope.

But one only reply did she give to all

the soothing, anxiously tender expressions which were addressed to her by the signora and Orazio, and that one was to Orazio, who was earnestly imploring her to suspend her belief till proof could be obtained.

"Proof!" exclaimed the lovely afflicted in a tone of mournful softness---"Ah! what more proof can I require, than the recollection of your looks, your manner and your words, when but this morning you spoke of Ange— of—oh! misery! my father!—The anguish and embarrassment of your air, the cautious kindness with which you mentioned him, your entreaties that I would think more favourable of him——oh! does not all explain that you knew, yet feared to tell me, that, in shuddering at the name of Angelo Guicciardini, I was shrinking in horror from the name of him who, by the sacred claims of religion and of nature, has undeniable rights to my reverence and affection?"

Wholly unavailing were the solemn assurances of Orazio, and the pleading entreaties of the signora. Cecilia now only averted her face and wept, till her friend giving utterance to the agonised feelings of her mind, in a faint reproach on the pertinacity with which she adhered to her strangly formed opinion, induced Cecilia to look rounde and, in a voice of inarticulate woe, exlaim,

"Ah! urge me not to declare that *I* can have no doubts on this subject, for this death-striking discovery has explained to my tortured soul the fearful import of

the awful and mysterious words which once my hapless mother breathed over my pillow, when supposing me lulled in the unconsciousness of tranquil repose.—' Ah, child of misery!' she pronounced, ' though born to inherit only woe and imputed infamy, still may the guardian powers that watch the slumbers of the guileless innocent preserve and——' The sentence was unfinished, for the awe and terror which her words, and the solemn tone of her voice, inspired, as suddenly I started from my unsound slumber, caused me to clasp her uplifted hands, while in fearful accents I besought the meaning of those terrific expressions. But my mother shrunk from explanation—She wept, but she evaded my enquiries: her look of sorrowful reproof silenced me, yet the remembrance of her words is still indelibly impressed upon my heart.—The dreadful import is now, alas! most clear.—Ah! then forbear these kind, but unavailing endeavours to conceal from me to what a fate I am too surely doomed."

Incapable now of urging aught in opposition to the apparent truth of this horrible discovery, both Signora della Albina and Orazio gazed on the lovely girl with looks which spoke all the grief and concern her declaration was but too truly formed to inspire in their bosoms. A few moments of mutual and distressing silence ensued. Cecilia then arose, and while with a trembling hand she essayed to hide the tears of agony which hung on her pale cheek, she

meekly bowed her head, and attempted to move towards the door. The benevolent signora insisted on supporting her to her room, but Cecilia would have declined this favour—gently she recoiled from the offered assistance, while, in tremulous accents, she murmured, "Ah, Signora!—I am no longer worthy this distinguishing attention, it ill becomes the daughter of Angelo Guicciardini to indulge the presumptious hope of inspiring further interest in the hearts of the good and noble."

"Dear, amiable child!" softly exclaimed the signora, "Why dost thou suffer the delicacy of thy sensitive feelings to render thee thus unjust?—Are you not still Cecilia di Berlotti—still the same artless innocent being, whose virtues must ever ensure affection and esteem?"

Cecilia averted her eyes, and wept even more bitterly, yet suffered the signora to lead her from the apartment, while Orazio observed a silence but too expressive of the overwhelming emotions of his mind, and slowly followed their steps till the signora led her young charge up the grand staircase. He then returned to the saloon he had just quitted, and remained in a state of unconquerable agitation and distress till the re-entrance of the marchese.

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